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THE
LIVES OF THE PLAYERS.

BY JOHN GALT, ESQ.

AUTHOR OF

“THE LIFE OF BYRON,” “ANNALS OF THE PARISH,” &c.

“The best actors in the world, either for tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral,
pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral.”

SHAKSPEARE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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LIVES OF THE PLAYERS.

CHARLES MACKLIN.

THEY are not always the greatest men whose lives and adventures best deserve to be recorded; those only who have met with remarkable events, and encountered in the course of their fortunes accidents different from the ordinary tenour of human affairs, are worthy of the honour. In some respects Macklin was of this description; he was not so eminent in his profession as to be entitled to the distinction he claimed, and which he in a great measure obtained, but still his life was greatly an exception to the biography of others. Charles M'Laughlin, (for so he was really called,) was descended from the Irish clan of that name. Macklin himself used to say, that they considered themselves as the descendants of the ancient kings of Ireland, and that, in his time, to maintain the memory of their alliance to royalty, the chief once a year held a solemn court, to which all the kin of the clan repaired.

“I have myself been once at this royal meeting,” he sometimes said, “and could not help being exceedingly impressed with the ceremony of my introduction to our chief, who, as a relation, received me most graciously.” This may all be true, but the early part of Macklin's life

is involved in obscurity. In a brief memoir I have of him, the title-page and the date of which are lost, it is stated that a late Irish judge has been frequently heard to declare, that he remembered him in Trinity College, Dublin, where he used to attend in the menial capacity of an errand-boy. But it is also reported, that at the siege of Londonderry he had three uncles within the walls and three without, who respectively distinguished themselves for King James and King William with great bravery.

The report during his life is, that he was born in the last year of the seventeenth century, but the prevalent opinion would say he was older; and there is a story that instead of 1699 he was born in 1690, and that his taking off nine years of his real age was to conciliate the affections of a theatrical mistress who was then under twenty. But there are better evidences than opinions with respect to the period of his birth. In 1750 there was a woman then living, a first-cousin of Macklin's mother, and who resided with her at the time of his birth; this woman always said that Charles Macklin was two months old at the battle of the Boyne, July 1, 1690, and this was partly confirmed by a strolling-player of the name of Ware, who was living in London about the year 1784, and was then eighty-two years of age; he remembered Macklin a full-grown man when he was a boy, and that from his love of rioting and other dissipations he was then called "Wicked Charley," and "The Wild Irishman." It does not appear, however, that the question is of any importance, but Macklin himself always equivocated respecting his age, and his conduct as regards it was enigmatical.

His earliest recollection of himself was when a boy

of six or seven years of age, living on a small farm with his parents. His father was a Presbyterian, and his mother a Papist; but in every other respect save that of religion they lived happily together. In their neighbourhood, a widow lady, a near relation of the Besborough family, resided, who took a partiality for young Macklin, and while he was under her protection the tragedy of *The Orphan* was got up during the Christmas holidays, and the part of Monimia was assigned to him, which he performed with great applause: an incident which probably determined his future profession.

At the age of fourteen he was bound an apprentice to a saddler, but his notions of life were of a higher scope, he soon escaped from his trade, and travelled up to Dublin on foot. How he managed to exist there he never told, but the story of the Irish judge comes partly in to explain it, and it was as humbly as could well be; all he himself ever acknowledged was, that after being some time in the metropolis, he got settled as a badgeman in Trinity College.

About the year 1725 he first came to London and was engaged at the Lincoln's-inn theatre. The character he first appeared in was that of Alcander in *Ædipus*, in which he spoke with so little of the tragic cadence then in fashion, that the manager was not satisfied. "I spoke so familiarly," he used to say, "and so little in the hoity-toity tone of the tragedy of that day, that the manager told me I had better go to grass for another year or two." Macklin took his advice, and joined a strolling company in Wales.

Previously to his going into Wales he spent some months with a son of the Dublin manager, who was of a dissipated turn, and who being well acquainted

with the town, introduced him into many scenes of profligacy. One night, at the gaming-table, Macklin won above four hundred pounds, and with this sum he and his companion, attended by two ladies of the town, went down to the immaculate borough of St. Alban's to enjoy for a few days the pleasures of the country. Their adventures there remind us of Miss Scraggs, in Goldsmith's "Vicar of Wakefield," so renowned for her taste in Shakspeare and the musical-glasses. One night they went to a public ball, and being dressed expensively, were at first much noticed, but one of the ladies getting into a dispute about precedence in the country-dance, her language and temper betrayed her profession, and both she and her companion were in consequence quickly handed out of the room, and the gentlemen politely desired to follow them.

His rambles to Wales and Bristol afterwards, were such as might naturally be expected to happen to a wild young fellow who was never troubled with diffidence. While at the latter place he paid great attention to the daughter of a gentleman, who agreed to receive his visits in the dark, and left one of the windows of her father's parlour unbolted that he might get the more easily in. Unfortunately for the player, he had that night to perform Hamlet and Harlequin, which made him late. On his setting out, too, a heavy shower drenched him to the skin; and, to complete the climax of misfortunes, just as he had raised the sash and was stepping in, he overturned a large china jar full of water, which made such a noise as to alarm the family. Miss heard the uproar and was the first down to see what was the matter, when she advised him to make the best of his way out of the

house, and was obeyed. Reflection then got the better of the lady's love, for she never afterwards spoke to him.

I have not been able to glean much of Macklin's adventures till he appeared permanently on the London boards, on the 18th of September 1730, but he was in the metropolis undoubtedly when *The Beggar's Opera* was brought out in 1728, and being present at the first representation, confirmed what has been often said, that its success was doubtful till after the opening of the second act, when, after the chorus "Let us take the road," the applause became universal and unbounded. In the scene where Peachum and Lockit are described settling their accounts, in which Lockit sings,

"When you censure the age," &c.

the whole audience turned their eyes on Sir Robert Walpole, who was in one of the side boxes, and loudly encored it. Sir Robert instantly saw that they applied the song to him, and no sooner was it finished, than he himself with great good-humour encored it; by which address he so won on the audience that they gave him a general huzza from all parts of the house, but afterwards he is said to have always evinced great reluctance to be present at this popular political play.

It is not generally known that the first song, "The modes of the court," was written by Lord Chesterfield,— "Virgins are like the fair flower in its lustre," by Sir Charles Hanbury Williams,— "When you censure the age," by Swift,—and "Gamesters and lawyers are jugglers alike," by Mr. Fortescue, Master of the Rolls.

But to return to our narrative. The first part that I have been able to assign to Macklin is, that on the 18th

of September 1730, he personated Sir Charles Freeman, in the great booth on the bowling-green Southwark; a proof that he did not then stand eminent, for the part is trifling, and the company was certainly not distinguished. But in the winter of the same year he was engaged again at Lincoln's-inn-fields, and received the first marks of approbation as an Irish witness in the comedy of *The Coffee-house Politician*, and in consequence an intimacy between him and Fielding ripened into friendship.

It is necessary to mention some facts, which belong more to general history than to the biography of our hero, but as the stage holds a mirror up to nature, and reflects the passing manners of the time, they may be as well noticed here as elsewhere. There was a house in Covent Garden remarkable for selling Derbyshire ale, cheap and much liked by the customers. The calm which succeeded the peace of Utrecht reduced many officers to live on their friends, and those in particular who lived about London much frequented this house, which they did at this time in such numbers, that by way of distinction they were called the Derby Captains; a term much used by Farquhar and other comic writers of his day. Macklin often here drank his pint of Derby ale. At that time Covent Garden also was a scene of much dissipation, being surrounded with taverns and night-houses, which, with the vicinity of the houses in Clare-market, were the rendezvous of the theatrical spirits. The ordinaries were there from sixpence to a shilling a-head; at the latter were two courses, and a good deal of what was called good company in the mixed way. The Bedford Head, in Maiden-lane, was probably among the last of them; and there was perhaps among the

people less distinction of orders and classes than is now commonly met with. The butchers of Clare-market were the friends of the players, and always in every riot sided with them, for it was not criminal in those days to be riotous. A countryman was instantly known by his dress as well as his manners; grey cloth or drab-colour, with a slouched hat and lank hair, was the common hue and style of their appearance. London was then seldom visited; stage-coaches were few, and the country shopkeepers had their goods sent to them on written orders. The city and west-end of the town were widely apart; no merchant lived out of the former, his residence was attached to his counting-house. The first emigration from the city was to Hatton-garden, but none save men of large acknowledged fortune durst take so great a flight. The lawyers lived mostly in the inns of court, and the players around the theatres.

The audiences were then of different natures to those of our day, likewise; a vulgar person scarcely ever frequented the pit, and very few women, as is still the practice in foreign theatres. In that part of the house the audience was composed of prosperous young merchants, barristers, and students of the inns of court. Riots rarely disturbed the tranquillity of the pit; none but people of independent fortune and avowed rank ever presumed to go into the boxes, and the lower ones were sacred to virtue and decorum. No man sat covered in a box, or stood up during the representation, save those only of the last row who could incommode nobody. The women of the town seldom frequented the theatres, but kept few and far aloof in obscure situations; neither boots nor spurs were admitted before the curtain, nor horses behind the scenes. There was in all public life a

greater observance of order, while in private a more homely and hearty intermixture. Many allusions to this state of society may be found in the comic writings of that time, and unless they are understood, some of the best points of the plays fall without effect. Comedy is the glass of fashion,—the figures are ever changing in it; tragedy is the mirror of the passions, which are in every age similar and unalterable.

It ought here to be mentioned, that Macklin was tried at the Old Bailey, on the 12th of December 1735, for having run a fellow actor through the eye, in a passion, with a broomstick, but he was found guilty only of manslaughter.

The particular period when Macklin married is not very distinctly made out to us; but his eldest daughter played, in 1742, the little Duke of York, in *Richard the Third*. Mrs. Macklin's name was Grace Parror, a good actress in odd and old women, the humble friend of Booth's wife, Miss Saintlowe, with whom she lived. The marriage was profitable to Macklin, and she had an intractable husband to manage; but as there was much good-nature on both sides between them, it proved tolerably happy.

In 1741, Macklin certainly reached the highest height he was ordained to attain, and that was in the part of Shylock, which was then raised from the base and black-guard cast into which it had been the custom of the players to represent it, and fairly admitted to its proper tragic importance—the change has been ascribed to Macklin, and the performance has been said to have been one of the noblest specimens of acting. The character of Shylock has, indeed, been always reckoned one of the most difficult to personate effectively—

many performers, who have been great in other parts, have failed entirely in this. John Philip Kemble's representation has been condemned as an entire misconception. It was about the time that Macklin first played Shylock, that his marriage with Miss Parror took place.

The history of the revival of Shylock is curious, and should not be omitted. It had happened that Fleetwood, the manager, was by his imprudence ruined, and induced Macklin, in one of his hours of difficulty, to join him in a bond for three thousand pounds. Macklin, however, soon saw his folly, and resolved, if possible, to extricate himself. Full of gloomy reflections, he went with his wife to Bristol, where soon hearing how Fleetwood was embarrassed, he returned suddenly, in order to disengage himself from an obligation that threatened him with the loss of liberty for life. On his return, he called at the manager's house, where, being told he was attending the late Frederick Prince of Wales in viewing the curiosities of Bartholomew Fair, he hastened to the spot, where he told Fleetwood he had just broke out of Bristol gaol, and a long frightful tale, all equally true. A meeting was in consequence settled for that night, at which the actor played his part so well, that Paul Whitehead was induced to become bondsman for him, and so the matter was settled as far as Macklin was concerned. But Whitehead was soon obliged to pay the money, for Fleetwood ran away to France, leaving Macklin in the management behind him; and it was owing to this circumstance that he was led to revive the play of *The Merchant of Venice*, which had been laid upon the shelf ever since 1701, to make way for an alteration of the same play by Lord Lansdown, called *The Jew of Venice*.

The play was announced to be in preparation, but when he came to affix to himself the part of Shylock, the laugh was general. His best friends shook their heads, and his rivals exulted in secret, and flattered him with success to work his destruction. His keen observation and suspicious temper saw the train that was laying for him, and he seemingly affected to assist it at the rehearsals, by playing under both his voice and power, and thus entrapped them in their own snare.

The long expected night at last came ; the house was crowded from roof to foundation, and the two front rows of the pit were filled with critics. "When," says he, "I made my appearance in the green-room, dressed, with my red hat on my head, my piqued beard, black gown, &c. and with a confidence which I had never before assumed, the performers all stared at one another." The bell at last rung ; he palpitated a little, then throwing himself on the protection of Providence, boldly advanced on the stage, and was received with thunders of applause. The attempt was eminently successful, and Macklin raised himself to the summit of his glory.

We are now verging to an important æra in the history of the English stage, the appearance of Garrick. A few years before he came out at Goodman's Fields, Macklin had become acquainted with him, and spoke of him as a very sprightly young man, neatly made, of an expressive countenance, and most entertaining manners. Garrick was at this time a wine merchant, and they became intimate friends—and when he did appear as a player, Macklin was one of his warmest advocates. The revolution which Garrick introduced he warmly defended, and maintained, though he was not able to attain it well himself, that instead of an elevated voice or depression of

its tones, and a formal measured step in treading the stage, the natural familiarity of Garrick's manner was juster and superior. This was the more agreeable task for him, as Rich, several years before, had discharged himself from the Lincoln's Inn theatre, for speaking too familiarly on the stage; but he had now his revenge.

In 1743 the irregularities in the concern had arisen to such a pitch with Mr. Fleetwood, that Macklin, with Garrick and several more of the performers, associated against him. An application was made by them for a licence to perform at another theatre, but it was not granted. Disappointment and necessity soon compelled the refractory to go back, and Garrick joined them, but Macklin and his wife were excluded by the offended manager. This affair came to a rupture between Garrick and Macklin, and a sharp controversy was the consequence, which ended, as wherever there is more bitterness than reason, in no rational result. One fact, however, cannot be disguised; Macklin was left in the street, after his dismissal, in embarrassed circumstances, and in a condition that could not but affect the humane with pity. He was, however, so actuated by his resentment, that he did not feel it greatly himself. It was in their enmity that, among other faults, he imputed avarice to Garrick: a charge, however, far from being well founded, for the utmost that could in justice be ever said of Garrick was, that his economy was not uniform, nor always well regulated.

Being excluded from Drury Lane, Macklin, in the spring of 1744, opened the little theatre of the Haymarket with a tribe of green performers, who were his pupils; but the speculation did not greatly succeed, and in the following winter matters were so arranged that he returned to Drury Lane, and conciliated the public on

his appearance by a prologue of his own writing, in which his error was acknowledged.

Towards the close of the season of 1746-7, the reputation of *The Suspicious Husband* sharpened a number of green-room wits, who thought less of it than the public. Macklin opposed himself to their opinion, and wrote a farce in vindication of the comedy, but it was withdrawn, being unsuccessful.

In 1748, Mr. Thomas Sheridan, who was then manager of the Dublin theatre, engaged Macklin and his wife for two years, at a salary of eight hundred pounds a-year; liberal in itself, but beyond the establishment to sustain. This Macklin probably soon saw, but he had a greater theatrical grievance to complain of. They had scarcely been a month in Smock Alley, when he discovered that the manager was more inclined to perform tragedies than comedies, and was guilty of the heinous theatrical sin of putting his own name in the playbills in larger characters than Mr. Macklin's; so that in the end, on account of Macklin's humour, both he and his wife were shut out of the Dublin theatre.

He then returned to England, where he commenced manager with a strolling troop at Chester, and in the winter came back to London, and performed at Covent Garden theatre.

In 1753, having obtained from Garrick the use of his theatre, Drury Lane, for the night, he took a formal leave of the stage, with an epilogue written for the occasion by Garrick. The step was in itself ludicrous, for he was still in the vigorous possession of all his faculties; but he had formed a scheme of at once making his fortune by establishing a tavern, coffee-house, and

school of oratory, in the Piazza of Covent Garden—a scheme conceived in ignorance and carried into effect by presumption. It failed, though executed with much ceremonious mummery, neither consistent with the age nor the manners of the nation.

Macklin, however, worked at his scheme till he became a bankrupt; when, being released from the duties of lecturer and tavern-keeper—duties which neither his talents or temper ever fitted him for executing properly, his intention was to found a new theatre in Ireland with Spranger Barry. In the mean time, an incident occurred sufficiently characteristic of our hero, and of a sort of men that go about town, sometimes with fortune, and sometimes with none, but equally worthless, and equally despised, whether with or without.

Miss Macklin had but just appeared on the stage, when a noble Lord well known on the turf, called on the morning of her benefit, as her father was sitting at breakfast, and after praising her in the highest terms, his Lordship said to Macklin,

“After what I have said of your daughter, Mr. Macklin, you may suppose I am not insensible to her merits—I mean to be her friend; not in the article of taking tickets for her benefit, and such trifling acts of friendship, which mean nothing more than the vanity of patronage. I mean to be her friend for life.”

“What do you allude to?” said the actor, roused by the last expression, and staring at his guest.

“Why,” replied the other, “I mean as I say, to make her my friend for life: and as you are a man of the world, and it is fit you should be considered in the business, I now make you an offer of four hundred per

annum for your daughter, and two hundred in like manner for yourself, to be secured on any of my estates, during both of your natural lives."

Macklin heard him; he was at the time spreading some butter on his roll, and had in his hand a large case-knife, which grasping firmly, and looking at the fellow, desired him instantly to quit the room, telling him how much he was surprised at his attempt at the honour of a child through the medium of a parent. He affected not to heed the reproof, when Macklin springing from his seat, and holding the knife at his throat, bade him make the best of his way down-stairs. The noble rascal needed no other admonition, but jumped to the door, and scampered off across the market at full speed.

Previously to the indentures being drawn between our hero and Barry, for their new theatre in Crow Street, Dublin, Macklin gave in a plan of managerial arrangement which roused Barry. Seeing him surprised, Macklin cried, "Not, my dear Barry, that I want to take your parts from you, but by way of giving the town variety, you shall play Macbeth one night, and I another, and so on with the rest of the tragic characters. Thus we shall throw lights upon one another's performance, and give a bone to the lads of the College."

Barry remonstrated against this absurd project, telling him gently that Macklin had a large circle of comic parts, sufficient both for fame and fortune, without risking the taking up a new business, at his time of life. The taunt had the due effect. Barry would have nothing to do with him as a fellow-manager, though he afterwards engaged him as a journeyman, with his wife.

In the spring of 1757, Macklin, in consequence, went to Ireland with Barry, and was present at laying the

foundation-stone of Crow Street house. He was indeed a constant inspector of the progress of the building, descending on the structure of the Greek and Roman theatres, of which he knew as much as he did about the cathedral in Pandemonium. To the no small amusement of the spectators, one of the workmen reminded him, that they were building an Irish not a Greek playhouse, and must build according to the plan; at which he was so offended, that he silently slunk away.

Before the theatre was finished Mrs. Macklin died, to the great grief and loss of her husband, as her judgment and good sense often kept him within the pale of propriety.

On the 23rd of October 1758, the new theatre in Crow Street was opened, and Macklin joined the company, when a decent time after her death had elapsed. In the course of the following year he returned to London, where he prepared his amusing farce of *Love à la Mode* for the stage—a stock piece, which though at first it met with opposition, is deservedly so still when actors can be found able to act it. The history of it is curious.

Some time before going to Dublin, Barry and Macklin had been spending the evening at a public house, when they were joined by an Irishman, who had been some years in the Prussian service. He happened to seat himself in the same box with the managers, and as Barry perfectly understood the Irish character, could tell agreeable stories about them, and was besides considered an ingenious humbug, he soon scraped an acquaintance with his countryman, and brought him out in full blow. The simple, honest stranger was led on to speak of his birth, parentage, and education, and to tell

them how he was originally designed for a priest, and following an uncle, who was of that profession, to France, to be bred up for that purpose; how, luckily his uncle died and left him to follow the profession of his soul, which was a soldier; how he afterwards listed in the Prussian service; how he was rewarded by the great Frederick with a lieutenancy; and how he was come over to England to receive a legacy, left him by a cousin of his mother, a cheesemonger in the Borough. To this account he gave them a long list of his amours in France and Prussia, and sung them humorous Irish songs, and yet was, withal, so open-hearted and unsuspecting, that Macklin jocularly attributed his great success among the ladies, to his having a tail behind, common to all Irishmen. On the instant, the stranger pulled off his coat and waistcoat to convince Macklin that no Irishman in that respect was better than another man. It was out of this conversation, and the simplicity of the officer, that the construction of the farce originated, at first intended for a five-act play, but curtailed into a farce by the advice of Arthur Murphy.

Macklin's next dramatic bantling was *The True-born Irishman*, a clever farce, which was received with great success and popularity in Dublin, but when attempted in London was damned. In 1764 he produced another piece, being then at Smock Alley theatre, called *The True-born Scotchman*, which was so successful, that the author was encouraged to extend it, and it is now the far-famed *Man of the World*; an admirable conception, excellently worked up and universally admired as one of the best comedies on the modern English stage; but, save in the possession of a Scotchman, or of one who can speak the language properly, never adequately perform-

ed; indeed, nothing can be more disgusting than Macklin's Scotch as such. He appears to have had no just idea of what it should be, but wrote bad language and spelled Scotch words with the English idiom, imagining that a distinct language, both in idiom and by the use of inflections, was the same as English.

Macklin returned to London in 1767, where he brought out his farce of *The True-born Irishman*, but where, as I have already stated, it did not succeed, but it gave occasion to a remark of the author, which, for shrewdness, would have done honour to Quin. Seeing how flatly the performance told on the audience, "I see it," said he; "they are right. There's a geography in humour, as well as in morals, which I had not previously considered."

About the year 1770 he returned to Ireland, having in the mean time been engaged in a Chancery suit, into which he entered with as much zeal and alacrity as if he had been the solicitor. In fact, he was so; for he answered all the bills himself, presenting to the eye many a sheet of endless repetitions, with no improper brevity, as if he had been regularly bred to the law. But his performance in the character of an attorney was nothing equal to his more legitimate attempt as a player in a new line of characters. At the age of seventy—but there is good reason, as I have shown, to believe, when he was ten years older,—he aspired to new honours in Richard, Macbeth, and Othello. Early in the year 1772, being in London, he made an engagement with the manager of Covent Garden theatre, and on the 23rd of October, in the same season, performed Macbeth. Previously the character used to be dressed in a suit of scarlet and gold, with a tie-wig, and, in every other respect, like a modern military officer: a glittering illustration of the state of

learning among the players. Garrick always played it in this attire ; Macklin, however, saw the absurdity, and appeared in the old Caledonian habit, and the other characters were also appropriately dressed. But although his performance had many points of excellence, it was not altogether a good performance, and he was treated with much contumely by some of the audience ; so much so, considering his great age, that it reflects on the parties the utmost disgrace.

In 1775 he engaged to perform in Dublin and Cork, and he visited at intervals Scotland, and the provincial theatres.

About this time, he, who had ever some scheme in his head besides those germane to the matter of his profession, intended to leave the public, and at the age of seventy-five, if not eighty-five, to begin a new career as a farmer ; but, like many others, it went off into thin air.

In 1781, the comedy of *The Man of the World*, a little softened to mitigate the licenser, was brought out at Covent Garden. But in the course of the season the author met with a great misfortune by the death of his daughter, whom he much lamented. In 1784, he accepted an engagement to perform in Dublin. He was then, at the lowest computation, eighty-five, but by strong probability, ninety-five ; yet at this extraordinary age, by either computation, did he engage to visit a distant land, and to perform at least twice a week two of the most difficult parts ; he fulfilled, however, not only his engagement with spirit, but visited Liverpool and Manchester in the course of his journey ; performed at each some of his principal characters, and continued, with scarcely any declension of his powers, till the 28th of November 1788, when he

first experienced a decay in his memory. Next year, on the 10th January 1789, his recollection again failed; his last attempt on the stage was on the 7th of May following, when he tried Shylock for his own benefit, which the manager, knowing the state of the old man's finances, had granted, but to prevent disappointment, had another actor to study the part, for he dreaded the veteran's infirmities.

Macklin having dressed himself with his usual accuracy, went into the green-room, and coming up to the late Mrs. Pope said, "My dear, are you to play to-night?"—"Good God! to be sure I am; don't you see I am dressed for Portia?"—"Ah, very true, I had forgot;—but who is to play Shylock?" The feeble sadness with which he who was dressed for the Jew said this depressed all who heard it. Mrs. Pope however answered, rousing herself, "Why, you; are not you dressed for the part?" He put his hand to his forehead, and said, pathetically, "God help me!—my memory has, I fear, left me!" The whole range of the invented drama has few more mournful scenes; the poor old man, ninety-two or a hundred and two years old, went upon the stage and delivered two or three speeches, but evidently did not understand what he was repeating; after some time he, however, recovered, but it was only a flash from the burnt-out candle in the socket. Nature could go no farther;—he paused,—a poor, weak, and despised old man,—and looking helplessly around, said, "I can do no more," and retired from the stage for ever.

In private life, after this affecting exhibition, one of the most truly so ever shown upon the stage, Macklin, relieved from the drudgery of duty, somewhat recovered his wonted firmness, and his last years were made com-

fortable with an annuity purchased for him by the generosity of his friends. The remainder of life he spent, however, with only occasional enjoyment ; he went regularly to the play, but sometimes he forgot even the performance before him, and inquired, “ What was the play, and who the performers ;” but the audience pitied his feeble condition,—on his appearance at the pit-door, no matter how crowded the house was, they rose to make room for him, and to give him his accustomed seat, the centre of the bench behind the orchestra. One of the last efforts of his mind was when the Prince (George the Fourth) and Princess of Wales, after their marriage, appeared at the theatre ; the Prince recognised old Macklin and bowed to him, and the Princess soon after did the same, an honour which for some time gave him much pleasure, but he soon forgot it. On the 11th of July 1797, Death would equivocate with Time no longer,—Macklin in the evening composed himself, as some thought, for his usual sleep, but from that sleep he never woke again. He was buried in St. Paul’s Covent Garden, and his funeral was not only solemnly attended by his theatrical brethren, but by a great concourse of the populace, who regarded his death as an event important somehow to them all, for it interested their imagination, he having lived in three centuries.

JOHN HENDERSON.

WHENEVER a person of extraordinary talent appears, he is uniformly followed by a herd of imitators, and men who, if they had cultivated their own powers, might have become eminent originals, by falling in with that fashion never attain more than secondary rank. One of this class was Henderson, who in his day held a very brilliant station in the opinion of his friends, but now, when we have only the records of his merits to compare with each other, seems, in fact, to have been really only an able imitator.

The great peculiar endowment of John Henderson was mimicry; with the help of that talent, and in skillfully observing the distinctive characteristics of the celebrated players of the time, with a competent portion of natural shrewdness, he acquired considerable contemporaneous celebrity; but he was never a first-rate performer, even while it is admitted that in some parts he displayed great ability. The object of his ambition was evidently to be a copy of Garrick, with the addition of something that belonged to himself, but he unquestionably failed, and not only fell greatly short of his model, but when he acted from himself proved of an inferior order.

He was born in Goldsmith-street, Cheapside, in February 1746-7, and claimed his descent from the famous

Dr. Alexander Henderson, of Fordyllum in the North of Scotland, who maintained the cause of the Scottish Covenant and Presbyterian Church discipline in a conference at the Isle of Wight with Charles I. in opposition to the hierarchy. This lineage is, however, considered a little apocryphal; but his grandfather is mentioned in the *Memoirs of Mr. Annesley*, whose singular adventures attracted so much attention, and probably gave rise to the story of Savage and his unnatural mother. How often strange meetings and confluences of public persons are found in their memoirs! The reader of biography, who reflects on this, cannot but be struck with the truth of the aphorism that like draws to like; in so many and such various ways do individuals who resemble each other only in their notoriety constitute, as it were, a special class by their accidental junction with each other.

Henderson's father died when he was but two years old, and left his mother, with two sons dependent upon her, with only the interest of a thousand pounds to support them. She, however, retired to Newport Pagnell, and with a meritorious parsimony was enabled to educate and bring them up. The eldest was apprenticed to an engraver, but being of a delicate constitution, he was constrained, for the advantage of the air, to retire to Paddington, where being lodged in the same house with the afterwards renowned Kitty Fisher,—who, in her day, if not the *Cook's Oracle*, was a weird sister of the “pot,”—he suddenly, almost as it were by accident, died in her arms. John, our hero, continued with his mother, who not only taught him to read, and pointed out the authors who merited his chiefest study, but to recite passages from the English classics in her possession.

The first play which fell into his hands was *The Winter's Tale* of Shakspeare, and it inspired him with a strong wish to see a play, but there was no theatre in Newport Pagnell.

At the age of eleven he was sent to a school at Hemel-Hempstead, where he remained about twelve months. He then returned to London, and having by this time evinced a taste for drawing, he was placed as a house-pupil with Fournier, who was then a drawing-master of some reputation, but more renowned for the versatility than the eminence of his abilities; for though drawing was his profession, his ambition was to do what any other man could, and in consequence, being apt, he in the course of a few years distinguished himself as an engraver, musician, carver, modeller in wax, and wrote a book, esteemed of considerable merit, on drawing and perspective. Boswell, the biographer of Johnson, in his *Journal* says, The beasts have memory, judgment, and all the faculties and passions of our mind, in a certain degree; but no beast is a cook; and Fournier, among other accomplishments, was certainly not a beast, for he dressed and sold alamode beef, and the truffles and morrels he made use of led him to the study of natural history. At one time he kept a chandler's shop, and could transmute sprats into anchovies, substitute willow-leaves for tea, and augment the mass of Lisbon sugar with fine sand. He was also a tolerable button-maker, and not a contemptible buffoon, and he could bear the test of Dr. Franklin's definition of a man. "No animal but man," says the American philosopher, "makes a thing, by means of which he can make another thing." Fournier made graving tools and modelling instruments.—

Great excellence could hardly be hoped for in all these manifold attempts, but such was the master of Henderson.

From a person of this description, it could not be expected that our hero could acquire distinction. He was indeed used as might have been foreseen: instead of learning drawing, he was chiefly taught driving; for much of his time was occupied in conveying Fournier, in a one-horse chaise, to several of the academies about London, where he taught. Henderson had the horse to groom when he returned to town.

From Fournier he was removed to the house of a relation, a silversmith in St. James's Street, who proposed to employ him in making drawings and designs for his own profession; but the silversmith died, and at the age of twenty Henderson was left with few connexions, and without any well-determined pursuit.

Being thus cast upon the world alone, and meeting with no situation he could accept, he was advised to turn his attention to the stage, having among his companions often displayed those gifts of mimicry which he was afterwards greatly famed for possessing. His condition, however, during the time of what may be called his dramatic noviciate, passed not unpleasantly. He was in the family of relations, who treated him with kindness, who considered his interests as connected with their own, and who esteemed him for his talents and cheerfulness.

It has been said of Henderson, that perhaps it would not have been easy to point out a man who possessed such convivial powers in early life. His observations were shrewd and comprehensive, and his manners sprightly and winning, but he was prone to see the ludicrous in

all things, and many pleased with his wit, were withered by his ridicule.

A dealer in trinkets, who was ambitious of seeing his name enrolled as an artist in an exhibition-catalogue, made a copy of the Duke of Leinster's arms in human hair, and wrote to Henderson for a proper inscription to put under it, that it might attract notice in the exhibition-room—"Oh! I'll do that," said the wag; "you observe the supporters are two monkeys, take your inscription from Milton,

' In their looks divine,
The image of their glorious maker shone.' "

While he was preparing himself for the stage, the Ode to the Memory of Shakspeare was very popular as delivered by Garrick. Henderson was induced to attempt an imitation, and it is said, that it required a very accurate ear to distinguish the one speaker from the other. This was exhibited in a barn, or some such place, at the polite village of Islington, for the benefit of certain unfortunates self-denominated comedians.

At this time Henderson was esteemed among his companions, not only for his admirable mimicry, but the beauty of his readings, particularly of the story of Lefevre, by Sterne, to whose memory he wrote an ode, which was considered by his boon-companions as a surprising composition. This alleged master-piece, however, only tends to indicate his secondary character. Henderson, in fact, was, in his twentieth year, a thorough cockney of the apprentice grade. He was a distinguished member of a weekly club in Maiden Lane, consisting of twelve or fourteen members, "who wished to unite to the festivity of Anacreon the humour of

Prior, the harmony of Pope, and above all, the sensibility and pleasantry of Sterne."

It was a rule, when the society met, for the president to pour a libation, and drink to the memory of some departed genius, under the pretty denomination of "a skull;" and if they had drunk to the memory of Shakspeare, for instance, it was expected that the person next in succession should give a sentiment, which should have some allusion to the bard or his writings, and be new. But it was soon found that they were all so apt at work of this kind, that it interfered with their plan, which was to go home sober, and in consequence a delicious improvement was introduced. Each member was obliged to bring with him a volume of his favourite writer, and read such a part aloud as he thought most contributory to the amusement of the society. Thus Henderson came to great eminence, among the fourteen members, as a reader of Sterne!

It has become a duty in modern biography to seek and make up a catalogue of the works that men of genius studied in their youth, and no doubt some metaphysicians may discern a use in such collections, in assisting to form a proper idea of their characters; but I am not very sure in what the utility consists, knowing that such works as the following were part of Mr. Henderson's study,—*"The lamentable and true tragedie of Maister Arden of Feversham, who was most wickedly murdered by means of his most wantonne wife, who hired two desperate ruffians, Black Will and Shakbagge, to kill him."*—*"Life and Death of Lewes Goudfrey, with his abominable sorceries, after selling himself to the Devil."*—*"A Bloody New Year's Gift."*—*"A true declaration of the cruel and bloody murder of Maister Robert Heath, in*

his own house in High Holborne, being the sign of *The Fire-brand*.”—“A true relation how a woman at Athorbury, having used divers horrid imprecations, was suddenly burned to ashes, there being no fire near her.”—“Hellish murder committed by a French midwife.”—“Histories of apparitions, spirits, visions, and other wonderful illusions of the Devil.”—“The Surey demoniac, or Satan his dreadful judgments upon Richard Dugdale.”—“A pleasant treatise of Witches, their imps and meetings.”—“News from Italie of a most lamentable tragedie lately befallen.”—“Philomythic, wherein outlandish birds, beasts, and fishes are taught English.”—“Torquatus Vandermer, his seven years’ studie in the Arte offe Majecke, upon the twelve months of the year.”—“The Devil conjured by Thomas Lodge: a discourse of the sottle practices of Devils and Witches.”—“The Miseries of Infant Marriage.”—“Lavatus of Ghosts and Spirits walking by night, and of strange noises, crackes, and so forth.”—“Baylis his wall-flower as it grew out of the stone-chamber of Newgate.”—“Admirable History of a Magician, who seduced a pious woman to be a witch,” and “King James his Dæmonologia.”—This catalogue matches that which Byron has preserved of his early reading, and affords good evidence of the matter which some minds are made of.

Possibly by the perusal of such books as have been enumerated, the mind of Henderson was familiarized to fancies and objects of terror, and some colouring might be drawn from them for his portraits of Shakspeare’s grim characters; but, unfortunately for this theory, it was not in such parts that Henderson excelled. This, however, is no place to discuss the probable predilection for these works; all I would at present remark is, that

although Henderson had an appetite to sup as heartily on horrors as Spagnoletto had for skinned martyrs, I doubt if it very materially affected the native cheerfulness of his animal spirits.

As a probationer of the theatre, Henderson, like all such, was doomed to suffer his initiatory trials. Garrick was the object of his imitation, but the Roscius was not much gratified with the freedom taken, and an introduction to him was difficult; at last he obtained an audience of Paul Hiffernan, at that time one of the hangers-on at Garrick's footstool.

When the name and intention of Henderson were announced to Hiffernan, he looked in his face steadily, and then, like a drill-serjeant giving the word of command, cried, "Please to stand upon your pins." Henderson stood up. "Now," said Hiffernan, "young gentleman, I'll soon see if you'll ever make an actor—I'll soon see whether or not you are fit for the stage;" and stalking to a table-drawer, he solemnly took out a ball of packthread, from which he cut off a long piece, and tied the knife—portentous weapon—to the end of it. Then drawing a chair near to the young candidate, he mounted, and holding the knife to the top of Henderson's head, he let it fall like a plummet to the ground. On descending from the chair, and taking from his pocket, with a grave countenance, a two-foot rule, he in awful silence measured the length of the packthread, and shaking his head said, "Young gentleman, I am sorry to mortify you, but go your ways home, set your thoughts on somewhat else, mind your business, be what it will, and remember I told you; for the sock and buskin you won't do—you will not do, Sir, by an inch and a quarter."

This story, ludicrous in itself, is much of a kind with the receptions often met with in the world by those who

are standing on its threshold. Few men have ever reached the vestibule without observing that the grosser species of domestics are the ushers of the hall, and like Hiffernan, judge of the candidate's intellectual qualities for whatever he offers to undertake by his corporeal appearance; nor is the rule without wisdom, for good looks have long been esteemed the best recommendation.

Tired of paying fruitless homage to Garrick, Henderson resolved to try his fortune with the manager of Covent Garden theatre; but his success was no better, for the first question put to him was, "Had he ever been on the stage before, and was he a principal performer?" Some time after, he again applied to Garrick, who condescended to hear him rehearse several scenes in different characters, when he gave it as his opinion, that his voice was not sufficiently melodious, nor his pronunciation clear enough. "You have," said Garrick, "in your mouth too much wool or worsted, which you must absolutely get rid of before you can be fit for Drury Lane stage." But although this was humiliating enough, there was still some favour excited in the great actor by what he had seen, for he advised him to discipline his powers by country practice, and actually recommended him to the manager of the Bath stage; in consequence of which, Henderson, in September 1772, was enrolled as one of the Bath comedians for three years. The first year he was to receive one guinea per week, the second one guinea and a half, and the third two guineas, with an annual benefit. The only remark I would make is, that by this graduated scale of payment, it is plainly evident that the seeds of talent were discerned in Henderson, but that it was thought time was requisite for their cultivation and growth.

It would be ungenerous to deny the efficacy of Garrick's

scenic patronage. When it was known on the walks and in the public places of Bath, that a new actor had arrived from London, under the favour of the grand Roscius, all people of every rank became eager to see the phenomenon. He trembled himself with apprehension, and so great was his dread of a failure, that he assumed the name of Courtenay, and under that name made his appearance at Bath, on the 6th of October 1772, in the part of Hamlet. His anxiety on the occasion was so excessive that he could scarcely be heard at first; but the spectators, who felt their own self-importance gratified by his diffidence, soon eased him of his fears, and he concluded, not only with applause, but loud acclamations.

When the performance ended, a droll anecdote is told of the result. John Ireland, who was present, went into the green-room, and his discovery is the origin of the tale. Henderson's predecessor in the character was Lee, who used to play it in a suit of black velvet, much too large for Henderson; he was therefore under the necessity of performing in a suit of black cloth. His extreme agitation occasioned great perspiration; the coat was as if it had been "immersed in ocean;" and when the habit was resigned to the wardrobe-keeper, he received it with astonishment, mingled with horror, exclaiming, "They may talk of Muster Lee, but Muster Lee is nothing to this man, for what they call perspiration." Such were the tokens of approbation which adorned the first night of Henderson's appearance at Bath.

Hamlet, in the course of a few nights, was again performed. The house was as full as on the first night, and in his own opinion he played better. The Bath manager, who soon found his account in frequently employing

Henderson, worked him vigorously. He is supposed not to have acted fewer than thirty principal parts in the first year of his engagement, and all the Bath voices were loud in his praise.

With a young man's estimate of his success, he returned to London, expecting that the doors of Drury Lane and Covent Garden would be thrown open to him ; but he was grievously disappointed. The managers did not give credit to the rumours which had come from Bath concerning him ; or, what was the same thing, they did not believe that a Bath audience was composed of judges so good as the Londoners. Henderson, however, had his revenge, and in his hours of festivity frequently gratified himself and his friends by imitations of the principal performers, particularly of Garrick, who, when informed that his voice was such an echo of the green-room, invited him with two friends to breakfast, and requested a specimen of his art. The first three examples were Barry, Woodward, and Love, and Garrick was in ecstasy at the imitations ; but, after laughing his fill at those, he said, "I am told you have me ; do, my dear Sir, let me hear what I am." Henderson at first excused himself, till, urged by the two neutrals, he, in an evil hour, consented, and gave specimens of the little man in Benedict. The two hearers were delighted. Garrick, however, listened in sullen silence, and then rising walked across the room, and said, "Egad, if that be my voice, I have never known it myself ; for, upon my soul, it is entirely dissimilar to every thing I conceived of mine, and totally unlike any sound that ever struck upon my ear till this moment."

In this there may have been more truth than either of the parties supposed, in two ways—whatever wounds our self-admiration, renders us unfair judges, and it

may happen that we do not hear ourselves as others hear us ; but without embarking in any disquisition of this kind, perhaps neither the apprehension of Garrick, nor the mimicry of Henderson, was quite just ; for we are to remember that Garrick was by this time an old man, and his voice, as well as his appearance, was suffering from age, and that Henderson saw him only in his decay.

Chagrined with the repulses he had encountered in London, Henderson returned to Bath, where he quickly added new lustre to his fame. His friends there soothed his vexation by their applause, and the public spoke loudly of his performance ; but the still small voice of the manager behind the scenes was powerful over all.

In relating the little that has been preserved of those amusing persons who, in their day, were the delight of the theatrical world, there is a difficulty in the task which may not strike the reader so powerfully as it has done me. In all the memoirs of the actors a remarkable vein of vanity runs through them, and they are for the most part written by friends and admirers. To extract the truth from vanity and admiration is no easy task, especially when the subject becomes in any degree controversial. This is particularly the case with the present subject. Henderson was undoubtedly a clever performer, and a mimic of the most perfect class ; but he was not an actor of quite the highest rank, though his own conceit made him imagine himself another Garrick, and his friends took every opportunity to proclaim him as such with all their paper-trumpets. It must, however, be allowed that he was treated harshly and coldly by the London managers, and although their conduct was, no doubt, extenuated to themselves by their interest, yet it was not distinguished by either liberality or much intelligence. Mr. Colman

objected to the style in which Henderson sometimes dressed himself, and condemned his Shylock as too shabby. "The dress," said he, "had the appearance of one hired from a pawnbroker's; and in the impassioned scene with Tubal, he seemed a black Lear, or an odd resemblance of a mad king in a storm." This was nothing to Garrick's contempt, for it partook of personal enmity, and we have Henderson's own words for the odious sarcasm. "Garrick," says he, "asserts he had heard I swallow my parts like an eager glutton, and spewed my undigested fragments in the face of the audience." And Foote said "he would not do." All this serves to confirm the idea that he was not so extraordinary a man as his friends represented. But nevertheless, at the end of the second Bath season, he returned to London, where, after remaining some time, he could not obtain an engagement on such terms as he had expected, and accordingly returned to Bath, and was most flatteringly received. Before this time he had, indeed, from the partiality with which he was regarded by the inhabitants and visitors of that city, been styled the Bath Roscius, and perhaps it is not saying too much, that few performers in private life were more courted, or able to enliven society with more pleasantry.

The next incident in his life which deserves notice, is an attempt to get on the London boards with Garrick, in which it must be acknowledged that he showed a full sense of his own merits. Garrick, in the course of the transaction, was indeed highly offended, and with some reason; he accused him of an insolent attempt to usurp his province, take the management out of his hands, and dictate such terms as no actor of the most established reputation had ever presumed to offer. These were strong

terms, and perhaps exaggerated by passion ; Henderson himself disclaimed the accusation, but still they were not unfounded. An attempt with Mr. Harris, at Covent Garden theatre, was soon after equally unsuccessful. Though it may seem ludicrous to make the remark, yet I do not make it lightly, the intrigues, and cabals, and jealousies, of statesmen, really appear to be inconsiderable, when compared with the mighty plots and machinations of the players.

In the summer of 1776 he played under the management of Mr. Yates, at Birmingham, with Mrs. Siddons, who had the preceding winter played a few characters at Drury Lane, but with so little effect, that she was discharged for inability. Our hero, however, had the discernment to perceive some of her powers, which were yet in the bud, and wrote to his friend Mr. Palmer, the Bath manager, advising him in the strongest terms to engage her. Upon this curious fact I shall have an opportunity of expressing my opinion in the life of that sublime actress ; but it would not have been fair towards Henderson, not to have fully recognised his just claim to the honour of being among the earliest who did justice to her almost latent powers.

When Colman, in 1777, purchased from Foote the patent for acting plays at the little theatre in the Haymarket, he engaged Henderson, who was eager to show himself in London. With his renown as the *Bath Roscius*, he made his first appearance as Shylock, on the 11th of June 1777 ; and proved highly attractive. But notwithstanding his success was decidedly great, Leake and Harris would not be converted from their opinion, and still maintained that he was not qualified to undertake even a second or third part on the boards of Covent Garden.

The following winter he was, however, engaged at Drury Lane. Mr. Sheridan saw his merits, and acted towards him with liberality ; but by this time his reputation was at its height, and he not only endured the test of the London public, but won fresh laurels.

His career may, therefore, be considered for some time as regular, and the incidents of his life were little different from those I have had occasion to notice of other eminent performers.

In 1780 he went to Dublin, where he performed with the success which had attended his efforts in London, and his company was greatly in demand. He married after his return from Ireland, and his professional career assuming the same cast as that of others, he was now considered the best tragedian of his time ; Garrick was gone, and he had no eminent competitor.

On the 3rd of November 1785, he performed Horatius in *The Roman Father*, at Covent Garden, after which he was seized with an inflammatory disorder, and died on the 25th of the same month, in the fortieth year of his age. He was buried by his friends in Westminster Abbey, for he had ever many partial admirers.

There cannot, notwithstanding the remarks which truth required, be a doubt that Henderson was a performer above mediocrity, though far below excellence. His personal endowments were not of the first order, and these were sufficient to mark him of a secondary class ; so much is appearance essential to a player. His height was below the common standard ; his frame was uncompact, his limbs ill-proportioned. They were too short even for his height, and his countenance was not flexible in expression. In some respects he is said to have resembled, in his moments of animation, a portrait of Bet-

terton by Sir Godfrey Kneller. His voice was not melodious; it was alike deficient in the tones of love and rage—but his judgment was his talent. In soliloquy he was admirable, and in the expression of thoughtfulness and hilarity he was almost great. In all the ordinary qualifications he never attained very eminent success; but still he was ever a little higher than mediocrity, and had he not been a public performer, he would have been an accomplished private character. In a word, he was pleasanter to his friends and contemporaries than it is possible to render him to posterity.

MRS. CHARLOTTE CHARKE.

THIS eccentric damsel was the youngest child of Colley Cibber ; her mother was just forty-five years of age when she was produced, and had not for some seasons before been in the maternal way ; but, except by her father and mother, she was not received as a very welcome guest, a cause which has been supposed to have ministered to her misfortunes. She had, nevertheless, inherited from Nature considerable talents, and a large endowment of humour and whim.

When a mere child, about four years of age, she made herself distinguished by a passionate fondness for a periwig. One summer morning at Twickenham, where her father had part of a house and garden for the season, she crept out of bed, and imagined that by the help of a wig and waistcoat she would be a perfect representative of her venerable sire ; accordingly she stole softly into the servants' hall, taking her shoes and stockings with her, and a little dimity coat, which she contrived to pin up in such a manner as to supply the want of a pair of breeches. By the aid of a broom she took down a waistcoat of her brother's and an enormous tie-wig belonging to the old gentleman, which entirely enclosed her head and body, the knots of the ties thumping her heels, as she marched along with a slow and solemn pace : this covert of hair, with the weight of a huge

belt and a vast sword, was a terrible impediment to her procession.

Being thus accoutred, she took an opportunity to slip out of doors, rolled herself into a dry ditch, and walked up and down the ditch, bowing to all who went by. But the oddity of her appearance soon attracted a crowd,—a circumstance which filled her with exceeding joy; and so she walked herself into a fever in the happy thought of being taken for the squire her papa.

During the following summer Mr. Cibber's family resided at Hampton Court, and the mother being indisposed, drank asses'-milk night and morning. Miss happened to observe that one of those health-restoring animals was attended by its foal, and accordingly formed a resolution of fixing upon the foal as a padnag: this design she communicated to a troop of young gentlemen and ladies, whose adverse fortunes rendered it convenient for them to come into any scheme Miss Charlotte Cibber could propose.

Mrs. Cibber's bridle and saddle were secretly procured, but the riper judgments of some of the young lady's companions soon convinced her of the unnecessary trouble of carrying the saddle, and so it was concluded to take the bridle only. Away went Miss and her attendants to the field where the harmless quadruped was sucking: it was seized and bridled, and Charlotte triumphantly astride proceeded homeward with a numerous retinue, whose huzzas were drowned by the braying of the gentle dam, which pursued with agonizing sounds her tender and oppressed little one.

Upon making this grand approach, Mr. Cibber was incited to inquire, and looking forth from the window beheld his daughter mounted on the young ass, preceded

by a lad playing upon a twelve-penny fiddle, and a vast assemblage of dirty boys and girls in the rear. Her mother was not quite so passive as the father, but, in the opinion of Miss, was too active; for no sooner was the young lady dismounted than she underwent the discipline of the birch, and was, in contempt of dignity, most shamefully taken prisoner in the sight of all her attendants, and fastened by a packthread to a large table; and, what was worst of all, she was obliged to ask her mother's pardon, who was, in the opinion of the young lady at the time, the most in fault: such is, in all ages, the short-sighted injustice of man!—in this case, of woman!

There was indeed no limit to the juvenile vagaries and tricks of this maiden. She mentions herself, that in consequence of an old woman at Richmond having beaten her, she induced some of her playfellows to send as many as they could of her caps and small linen, that hung in the garden to dry, a-swimming down a brook that ran into the Thames, while she walked quietly home, apparently unconcerned at the mischief.

At eight years of age Charlotte was placed at a school in Park-street, Westminster, under the direction of a lady eminent for her good sense, who employed a French gentleman, a great master of languages, by whose advice she was instructed in Latin and Italian, and subsequently in other branches of learning which were not then deemed essential to female education.

After she had completed her different accomplishments, she retired with her mother to Hillingdon, near Uxbridge, where they lived for some time, and where Charlotte, for lack of other pastime, made herself mistress of shooting, in which she grew so great a proficient,

that she was capable of destroying all the venison and wild-fowl about the country. At length, unfortunately, one of her mother's straight-laced, old-fashioned neighbours paid them a visit, and persuaded her to put a stop to these unfeminine amusements, and so, upon this sober maiden-lady's hint, she was deprived of her gun.

Soon after she fell into infirm health, which occasioned her to be sent to Thorley, in Hertfordshire, the seat of Dr. Hales, an eminent physician, and a relation of the family, where she recovered, but made less progress than was expected in the art of housekeeping; for although she had daily before her the most perfect examples of housewifely qualities, she never once thought of cultivating those necessary offices, by which the young ladies of the family eminently distinguished themselves, especially in ornamenting the table. But if any thing was amiss in the stable Charlotte was sure to be at the head of the mob, and if all the fine work in the family had been in the fire, she would not have forsaken the curry-comb to save it from destruction.

During her residence at Thorley she grew fond of the study of physic, and being indulged in having a pony of her own, her friend the Doctor often desired her to call upon the neighbouring invalids to ascertain how they were, which gave her a most pleasing opportunity of fancying herself a physician, and acquiring the solemnity necessary to an effectual practice of medicine. At the expiration of two years she was recalled home to the house at Hillingdon, where she persuaded her mother to let her fit up a dispensary. Here she summoned all the old women in the parish to repair whenever they found themselves indisposed; and thinking a few physical hard words would improve her skill and reputation, she had

recourse to an old Latin dictionary, and soon confounded their senses.

Fond as she was of this learned office, she did not give up being lady of the horse, to which delicate employment she assigned a portion of every day's care. Providence, however, in all this was kind in many points, for though she did little actual good, she never had the least misfortune happen to any of the credulous mortals who relied upon her skill; sometimes, however, she thought she had inflicted a malady upon them that would last as long as they lived.

In this pursuit it was highly necessary to furnish herself with drugs, and accordingly she went to Uxbridge, where there was an apothecary's widow then living, whose shop, with stuffed alligators, and a beggarly account of empty boxes, was an emblem of the one described by Shakspeare. The good woman was rejoiced at her appearance, and credited her with a cargo of combustibles sufficient to set up a mountebank; but, alas! the apothecary's widow sent in her bill, which, however, her father paid, but gave strict orders never to let Dr. Charlotte have any farther trust:—Was not this sufficient to murder the fame of the ablest physician in the universe? However, she was resolved not to give up her profession, and being deprived of the use of drugs, she had recourse to herbs. In this dilemma, a poor old woman came with a violent complaint of rheumatic pains, and a terrible disorder in her stomach; Charlotte was at a loss what remedies to apply, but she dismissed her, like others of the faculty in difficulty, with an assurance of sending something to ease her, by an inward and outward application, before she went to bed.

It happened that the day was very wet, and the wet-

ness suggested to Charlotte to gather up all the snails in the garden; part of which, with coarse muscovado sugar, she made into syrup, to be taken a spoonful once in two hours. The rest she boiled with green herbs and mutton fat, and made into an ointment, and clapping becoming labels upon the phial and gallipot, sent her preparation, with a joyous bottle of hartshorn and *sal volatile*, purloined from her mother, to add a grace to her prescription.

In about three days' time the Goody came hopping along to return thanks for the great benefit she had received from the medicines, having found wonderful virtue and efficacy in the use of them. But fortune was not always kind; the friendly rain was succeeded by a drought, so that our heroine was obliged to dismiss her with a word of advice—not to tamper too much; as she was well recovered, to preserve herself so, otherwise a too frequent use of the remedy might lose its effect; and with the most significant air she could assume, she bade her go home and keep herself warm, and be sure to drink no malt liquor.

Being deprived, by the cruelty of her father, of the widow's shop, she became tired of her medicinal experiments, and addicted herself to gardening; and as she thought it always proper to imitate the actions of those characters she happened to represent, she also assumed the peculiarities of the gardener's. After having worked two or three hours in the morning, she thought a broiled rasher of bacon upon a luncheon of bread in one hand, and a pruning-knife in the other, making seeds and plants the subject of her discourse, were the true characteristics of a gardener. At other times a halter and horse-cloth brought into the house and awkwardly thrown down, were emblems of her stable profession; with now and

then a shrug of the shoulders and a scratch of the head, and a hasty demand for small beer, and a "God bless you, make haste; I have not a single horse dressed or washed, and here 'tis almost eight o'clock; the poor cattle will think I've forgot 'em; and to-morrow they go a journey: I'm sure I'd need take care of 'em." Perhaps this great journey was an afternoon's jaunt to Windsor, within seven miles of their house.

At this time her father had occasion to go to France, and the servant, who was in the capacity of groom and gardener, having the misfortune one afternoon to be violently inebriated, took it into his head to abuse the rest of his fellow-servants, and was in consequence dismissed, to the inexpressible joy of Miss Charlotte, who by that arrangement had then the full management of the garden and stables.

It was now sufficiently well known that, though she had a very acute perception of propriety in others, she had none in herself. She was indeed, in all respects, a singular person, and was deterred by no hazard from acting according to the whims of her own humour. Rumour of the man's dismissal soon spread far and wide, upon which Charlotte found it necessary to act as porter of the gate, lest some lucky mortal might have been introduced, to deprive her of the happy situation to which she had succeeded. For some time she answered the applicant's verbally; but in the end, being wearied with giving denials, she at last gave out that letters had come from her father in France, to inform them that he had hired a man at Paris. In all this time, though there was undoubtedly a vein of insanity in every thing she did, there was a careless innocence about her conduct that was often highly amusing to her family.

One day, upon her mother visiting her in the garden, where she was then digging, and approving of what she had done, Charlotte rested on her spade, and with a significant wink and a nod, asked if she imagined any of her other children could have done so much, and so well, at her age? and then proceeded to dig away with the double purpose of impressing her mother with her superiority and her industry.

At this juncture Mrs. Cibber, who had no great opinion of the discarded servant's honesty, traced his footsteps under the windows on the night after his dismissal, and became alarmed. In the anxiety which this circumstance gave rise to, the old lady communicated her fears to Charlotte, who most heroically promised to protect her life. Accordingly she desired all their plate, of which they had a considerable quantity, to be gathered up, and placed in a large basket by her bedside. This preparation added to the happiness of Charlotte, as it gave her an opportunity of raising her reputation for courage; and to establish that character, she stripped the hall and kitchen of their fire-arms, consisting of her own carabine, of which she had been divested by the old maid's exhortation, a heavy blunderbuss, a musketoon, and two brace of pistols, all which she loaded with a couple of bullets in each. But no occurrence of any consequence took place; not a mortal approached, and Charlotte began to fear she was undone; till a friendly dog, which barked at the moon, gave a happy signal. Our heroine bounced from her repository at the first sound of the cur's voice, and fired out of the window, piece after piece, till she had wasted about a pound of powder and a proportionable quantity of shot. The family was soon alarmed; her mother lay in horror, giving

way to every fear. Charlotte, however, was not daunted, she represented the robber as having fled at her first fire; but it was only the rustle of the wind in the bushes, for he had long before, in the course of that night, set off on foot for London. All the family was, however, consoled and comforted by what she said, and agreed that the loss of sleep was not to be put in competition with the hazard of their lives, from which she had so felicitously preserved them.

Immediately following this adventure she was involved in new troubles. Hearing of a fine young horse to be sold at Uxbridge, and having heard her father say before he went to France that he would purchase such an one when he came home, Charlotte flew to the man's house, where the horse was to be seen, and had him harnessed to a chaise, and out she set, at the hazard of her neck, on the Uxbridge Common. The horse was young and ungovernable, and dragged the chaise over hills and dales with such vehemence, that she justly despaired of ever seeing home again; and in her flight she ran over a child of three years old that lay sprawling for amusement in the cart-rut. The rapidity luckily prevented the death of the child, which was lifted up by its parents, and brought after her, attended by a numerous mob; but no essential harm being done, more than a small graze on the neck, the affair, as soon as Charlotte recovered from her fright, was made up with a shilling and a shoulder of mutton.

This was the last of her maidenly mischances, for soon after Mr. Charke came to court her—a worthless, but accomplished prodigal, who thought it would be a fine thing to become the son-in-law of Mr. Colley Cibber, who was then a patentee of Drury Lane theatre. It

does not appear that the affection was very fervent or sincere on either side; Charlotte thought it was a fine thing to be married, and fancied that her fondness for the condition of her lover was affection for himself.

About six months after her acquaintance with Mr. Charke, they were espoused in St. Martin's church; but, young and indiscreet, they were fitter for school; and we have seen enough of her natural disposition to let us know that she was rude and civil without design. Subsequent events soon proved that, although Charke possessed great talents as a musician, he had few other commendable qualities; and, in fact, the marriage had not been celebrated a month, before she had cause to repent it. Some lingering hope, however, attached her to a belief that when she had a child her husband would become better; but it had an opposite effect, and she possessed none of the graces that render home agreeable. For some time she bore her misfortune patiently, but Charke's constant disregard of her anxieties had, in the end, their natural consequences. His loose and wild behaviour led her into extravagant imaginations, to which at all times she was perhaps naturally prone, and they soon separated.

In the mean time having been preparing herself for the stage, she was induced to make her debut on the last night in which Mrs. Oldfield performed, and on that occasion gave such promise of success as an actress, that both that excellent performer and her father gave her the most flattering testimonies of their approbation. Perhaps no author has ever spoken more simply of their young delight than this gay, giddy, and eccentric heroine; but she never realized the promise of her youth

or the assurances of her early success. She describes herself as enjoying an ecstasy of heart as the time drew near when she was to come out; and acknowledges, with simplicity, her chagrin in seeing her part announced, "By a young gentlewoman who had never appeared on any stage before," instead of with her own name. This melancholy disappointment operated on her spirits, and drew her into a great expense for coach-hire, in going about among her acquaintances to inform them that she indeed was the young gentlewoman who had been announced for Mademoiselle, in *The Provoked Wife*. In the second attempt, her name was in capitals, and she declares that the perusal of it from the one end of the town to the other, was for the first week her constant business, both for the irrational delight of reading her name, and sometimes to hear strictures on herself, which, however, she says, were all to her advantage.

Her second part was Alicia, in which she found the audience as indulgent as at the first; and her third was in *The Distressed Mother*. By this time experience had taught her more timidity than she had felt at first; indeed, her tremor amounted in the third part to such a degree, that she would not have been surprised, had it been one morning announced to the town that she had died of a capital character.

Soon after *The Distressed Mother*, *George Barnwell* was produced, and Mrs. Charke, with great applause, performed Lucy, and fixed, of course, the taste for that character to all future time. Her merit in this part was considered so remarkable, that her salary was raised by it from twenty to thirty shillings a-week. It is, however, not the design of this work to treat of all the

characters that the parties performed; but only to give some account of their general manner, and the parts in which they chiefly excelled, or which were peculiar to them.

Upon Mr. Highmore making a purchase in the theatre, there was an immediate revolt of the majority of the company to the new theatre in the Haymarket, of which her brother, Theophilus Cibber, was the manager, and under whom her salary was raised from thirty shillings to three pounds a-week.

Mrs. Charke, having joined Mr. Fleetwood, was now entering on her destiny: she had some altercation with him almost immediately, and in consequence left the theatre; but the manager, despite of a farce she wrote to turn him into ridicule, consented, at the request of her father, to receive her back. She did not, however, remain with him long, but went to Henry Fielding, who at that time was manager of the Haymarket theatre, where her salary was increased at least another pound.

At the time she was engaged with Mr. Fielding, she lodged in Oxenden-street, and boarded with her sister. Being a sort of creature regarded as a favourite cat or monkey about the house, she does not appear to have been ever treated with much ceremony; on the contrary, she was easily put off, with what reasonable people might not only have deemed an inconvenience but an affront. She was put into the worst apartment, which was becomingly furnished: her description of it in verse has more playfulness than elegance.

She left this airy mansion, and taking a shop in Long Acre, turned oil-woman and grocer. This whim proved successful; every one of her acquaintances gave her their custom, and came to hear her talk largely of herself and other dealers. The rise and fall of sugars were her

constant topic; trading abroad and at home was as frequent in her mouth as her meals; and to complete this new farce, she took in the papers, to see what ships were come in or lost, who in the trade was bankrupt, or who advertised teas at the lowest prices; and she used on these occasions to expatiate with great gravity on all the ills that people in trade are heirs to, ending with a comment on those dealers who were endeavouring to undersell the general trade, shrewdly prognosticating that they would never be quiet till they had rendered the article of tea a mere drug, and that poor Mrs. Charke and many more in the business should be obliged to give it up—an injury to commerce in general! Her stock, gentle reader, did not perhaps exceed ten or a dozen pounds at a time, but it furnished her with as much discourse as if she had a whole ship-lading in her shop. Then as to oils, to be sure she was the first in the line, for though she seldom kept a gallon of a sort in the house, she used to write to country chapmen, her numerous correspondents, to deal with her. Never was such a compound of simplicity and folly; her medicine was sound and sober compared with her trade!

Upon due reflection, and having heard that children must creep before they walk, she justly considered that for the first year, until she had fairly established a universal trade, she, being a good horsewoman, should go the journeys herself, by which, no doubt, much money would be saved; but unfortunately she could gain no country customers. As a proof of her talent for business it may be related, that in selling a quarter of a hundred weight of lump-sugar, she evinced a degree of sagacity that has no parallel, not even in the bargain Moses Primrose made for the gross of green spectacles.

It was then customary, in buying lump sugars by the hundred, to be allowed a tret of six pounds extra. Poor Charlotte was so transported at hearing a friend ask for such a quantity, that forgetting the character of a grocer, and fancying herself the sugar-baker, she agreed to allow on the twenty-five pounds the half of the tret she got on the hundred, alleging that was the custom in the trade when people dealt in large quantities. Her friend was so pleased with this liberality, that she promised her all the custom she could bring, and if she had done much, would in due time have shown her the way to prison.

After this notable affair, when the sugar-dealer was gone with her bargain, Charlotte, considering that her business was now on the increase, began to think it was necessary to provide a large pair of scales, to weigh by the hundred weight, and a huge beam to hang it upon. For that purpose she set out next morning, but she could meet with nothing of the kind, and returned home with a resolution to have a pair made.

The worthy woman who kept the house, on hearing that she had been endeavouring to make this needless purchase, inquired into the necessity for it; upon which Charlotte told her what had happened the day before, and mentioned with glee and triumph how liberal she had been in the allowance to her friend; but much to her consternation, the landlady, instead of commending her skill and dexterity, was like to strangle with laughter.

Links and flambeaux are a commodity belonging to the oil trade, and Charlotte dealt in them. One of those nocturnal illuminators who help the bewildered in the twilight, bought often from her: gratified by his custom, she sometimes gave him a dram, and one evening thank-

ed him for using her shop; he bowed and smiled—she curtsied, and he walked away backward; but he had not been long gone when she discovered, to her amazement, that all her brass weights had been stolen.

After this fracas she lost all relish for the business, and had some secret thoughts of shutting up shop; and finally she did so, and opened a grand puppet-show over the Tennis Court in St. James's-street, for which, after much ado, she got a licence. This show was a very fine thing of the kind, and for some time it was marvellously prosperous, but in the end it sustained a blight; and her husband, who had in the mean time gone to Jamaica, departed this life.

Being, partly in consequence of fatigue in exhibiting her show, indisposed, and obliged for some time to give it up, she quitted the Tennis Court, and took a house in Marsham Street, Westminster, where she lived very quietly for some time. At last, recovering her spirits, she transported her dolls and puppets to Tunbridge Wells, but on arriving there found the ground pre-occupied, and was obliged soon after to return to London, where she let out her figures to a man who was chiefly employed in making them. In the end, the fashion proved to be transitory, so she sold the whole stock for twenty guineas, which had cost her nearly five hundred pounds!

She had not long parted with her images, when, being a widow, she was addressed by a worthy gentleman, and so closely pursued that she at last consented to a very secret alliance with him. But she was under obligations never to divulge his name: a misfortune from which she suffered extremely, for he soon after their union died, and left her with her daughter in a state of great necessity. This, however, is her own account of the matter;

and the reader, without much assistance to his sagacity, will discern, that no available reason is assigned for the mysterious concealment which she affected.

At the same time that she was exposed to all the consequences of this misfortune, she was arrested for a debt of seven pounds, at the instigation of a person whom she describes as "a wicked, drunken woman;" and after some time, and various attempts to find bail, she was at last obliged to surrender. By this time such had been her conduct, that it appears she had been deserted by all her own friends and relations, and was fairly an adventuress on the town; at least, she does not appear to have applied to any of them in her distress, while she mentions that, as soon as it was known she was arrested, all the ladies, to the number of about a dozen or fourteen, who kept coffee-houses about Covent Garden, assembled and offered to ransom her; but although the debt was only seven pounds, they could not raise as much money among them all as would pay it and the costs. In the midst of these disasters, some of which are calculated to force a smile, one meets with occasional touches of the most pathetic nature.

The Garden ladies being unable to extricate poor Mrs. Charke from her "durance vile," she was compelled to abide in the officer's house in a state of the greatest anxiety, and to leave her child, who was then only eight years of age, unacquainted, at her lodgings, with her forlorn condition. About seven o'clock next morning she, however, dispatched a messenger to the unlucky creature, who came to her with overflowing eyes and a heart bursting with sorrow. After indulging for some time in mutual and unavailing grief, Mrs. Charke sat down and wrote eight-and thirty letters before stirring from

her seat; but they proved of no use. The poor little wench was the bearer of these imploring epistles, and neither ate nor drank till she had delivered them all. Not, however, to dwell on such details; in the course of the day the ladies who had visited her the night before called on her with the celebrated Mrs. Elizabeth Hughes, and with her aid contrived among them to raise money enough to procure her liberty.

At this period Mrs. Charke, who had been throughout life partial to men's attire and vocations, was dressed as a cavalier, and went by the name of Sir Charles. Her hat being rather gaudy for her condition, and being the mark by which the officer had known her, she was advised by him to exchange it for his old one, which she did accordingly.

Having released her from captivity, her kind redeemers treated her with a joyous supper, and sent her home to her child with a guinea in her pocket, which they prevailed on her to accept as a present to her daughter.

During this period she had lodgings in Queen-street, and for some time, according to her own account, behaved with comparative propriety. She never made her appearance abroad but on Sunday, and had recourse to as many friends as she could muster for the support of her child and herself. But the girl took her parent's misfortunes so much to heart that she became dangerously ill. In this crisis her brother, Theophilus, was so far moved by affection and compassion towards her, that he sent her an apothecary at his own expense. It is only the squalid and disgusting features of poverty that we see; its cares and heart-hurts are hidden from our sympathy.

One Sunday, at this period, Mrs. Charke went out to raise a little money for herself and the sick child by pledging a pair of handsome sleeve-buttons; on her return, and asking the landlady how the child did, she received a satisfactory answer; but on entering the room, she found the unhappy creature stretched on the floor in strong convulsions. She flew upon the child in distraction, lifted it up, then threw it down, rushed into the street, and by her screams drew a crowd around, to whom she related that her child was dead, and that she was in despair.

In the midst of this scene of sorrow, a neighbour, who lived next door, hearing of her misfortunes, in a genteel and tender manner offered her his assistance unasked. He sent immediately a letter of condolence, inclosing the never-failing comforter of man, and continued for some time after to send regularly to inquire for the child's health, with the same respectful regard which might have been expected had the mother possessed that affluence which she had at one time enjoyed.

It happened, very opportunely for our heroine, that this neighbour had a back-door into his house, by which she could visit him unperceived, which she often did, and, by his kindness, received support for herself and the child; and, as soon as her necessities came to be generally known, her assistance from the players does credit at once to their humanity and munificence; but there appears to have been ever a vein of eccentricity about her which rendered the best acts of their kindness often nugatory.

Mrs. Charke, although a clever and intelligent person, had something about her which always marred her

intentions. She was now a regular nocturnal bird, and, as the health of her child improved, issued forth by owl-light in quest of adventures; and as plays were often acted at the Tennis Court, she sometimes went thither to see if any character was wanted at that great slaughter-house of dramatic poetry. On one occasion *The Recruiting Officer* was to be performed there, and Captain Plume was so unfortunate that he came at five o'clock to say he had not been able to learn a line of his part. Mrs. Charke did not venture to tell them she could speak it, being apprehensive that the well-known sound of her voice would betray her to some of the bailiffs, by whom she was at the time pursued; but in the end the question was put to her, and she answered in the affirmative: resolving, however, to make the best terms she could, she pretended she had nothing ready—being in want of white stockings and a clean shirt; though, in case of a chance, she had all those things in her pocket. After some delay, seeing they could not go on without her, she was engaged at a guinea. After the play, the better to escape detection, she was obliged to change clothes with a person of low degree, by whose happy rags, and the covert of night, she reached her home in safety, where she rewarded her accommodating friend with a shilling.

The sensation of this adventure had not subsided, when she was applied to by a fantastic mortal, Jockey Adams, famous for dancing the Jockey dance to the tune of "A horse to Newmarket." Gaping for a crust, she snapped at the first offered, and went with him to a town within four miles of London, where a very extraordinary occurrence took place to Mrs. Charke, who then

wore men's apparel, and appeared, by the discretion which she maintained in that capacity, to be in truth a well-bred gentleman. In this situation a young lady of fortune fell in love with her, an assignation was made, and after a very farcical interview, she found herself under the necessity of disclosing her sex, to quench the flames of her mistress.

Scarcely was this well over, when she was exposed to a new agitation of a different kind. A paltry fellow, who had been sometimes a supernumerary about the theatres, forged what she styles "a most villainous lie upon her." He asserted that she hired a fine bay gelding, and borrowed a pair of pistols, with which she encountered her father in Epping Forest, where she stopped his chariot, and upbraiding him, obtained his purse. The story soon reached her ear, and she was greatly exasperated; the recital threw her into a rage, from which she did not recover for more than a month. The evening after she had heard the report, she was placed behind a screen in the room where the fellow was to be; the lie was retold, she rushed from her covert, and being armed on purpose with a thick oaken plant, knocked him down, and had she not been prevented, would have killed him on the spot.

Her misfortunes were not, however, beyond the remedy of hope. Though she had grievously offended her father, yet, as he was an indulgent, good-natured man, she still cherished some expectation of being reconciled to him. This induced her, when she had published the first part of her memoirs, to acknowledge her errors, and beseech his clemency, but he returned her letter unopened—a circumstance which affected her in an extraordinary manner. It did not, as might have been expected, pro-

duce a sudden gust of passion, but sank into her heart, and preyed upon it with the slow and eating fire of grief and despair, ending in a fever, which long consumed her spirits, and was never effectually overcome.

But to return to the narrative. After the love-lorn lady had retired from the town where she disclosed her unhappy passion, the whole gang of the strollers clandestinely removed themselves under the cloud of night to a neighbouring village, into which, about six o'clock on a Sunday morning, they made their triumphal entry. The landlord, who happened, luckily for them, to be an indolent, good-natured man, seeing so large a company and such boxes come to his house, easily dispensed with the oddity of their arrival, and called out lustily for his maid and daughter to set on the great pot for the buttock of beef, and to make a fine fire to roast the loin of veal, and ordered the hostler to help up with the boxes, which were very weighty, being packed with scabbardless swords and sticks of departed mops, which had been exalted into tragedy truncheons.

In this town the players lived at rack and manger, but their trade failing, they were, before a week was well over, obliged to make a moonlight flitting.

With a solitary shilling Mrs. Charke went to London, and took a lodging in Little Turnstile, Holborn; but being soon inquired for, she set out the same day from town for Dartford, which she reached in a dreadful shower of rain about eight o'clock in the evening. She played that night; but having caught cold, became hoarse, and in consequence was turned off the next day with half-a-crown. She then returned to London, where, on account of her hoarseness, she had no way of getting

her bread, and was reduced to the necessity of pledging her own and her child's clothes for support. Before she began to recover her voice they were stripped to a bare change.

As soon as she was capable of speaking, she had another twilight ramble in quest of employment. In this adventure she went to play a part in Gravel Lane, where she met with a woman, who told her she had scenes and clothes in limbo for two guineas, and if she could propose any means for their recovery, she would make Mrs. Charke the manager of her company. Accordingly, all devices were immediately put into action, and the money was borrowed, the goods redeemed, and next morning they were off with a few hands for Gravesend. There they played with some success, and thence went to Harwich, where they were also prosperous. But, unfortunately, the lady's husband was cast at Newgate for transportation, and they were obliged to break up their party, while she proceeded to that dismal castle to take leave of him before he set forward on his travels.

In the mean time, though it has not been particularly noticed, the courteous reader cannot have been so ignorant of the world, as not to know that in all this time Mrs. Charke was improving in her education, and the result soon manifested itself. Finding herself thus again thrown adrift on the world, she had no other way of raising the wind but by paying a visit of gratitude, in fact, of beggary, to the good-natured ladies who had so compassionately released her from her first arrest.

Among other distressful evening patrols which she made at this time, was a visit to her brother, who kindly compassionated her wretchedness by putting half-a-crown in her hand, and invited her to dine with him next

day at a friend's house. Out of this arrangement she was introduced as a man to a noble lord, who was particularly nice in respect to the person he required. At this time his lordship kept a mistress in his house : when there was company she dined with Mrs. Charke ; and when they were entirely by themselves, Mrs. Charke was often permitted to dine with his Lordship and his favourite.

In this situation the time of our heroine passed comfortably, but, at the instigation of some of his Lordship's friends, she was discharged, and again reduced to sorrow and destitution. Shame encompassed her, life became a burden, and she began to desire to die. When poverty throws us beyond the reach of pity, our condition is like that of the poor wretch clothed with rags in a frosty morning ; no effort can make comfort.

In this juncture she was fortunately inspired with adequate resolution. She took a neat lodging in a small street facing Red-lion-square, and wrote a letter to a friend describing her hapless situation ; in the course of a quarter-of-an-hour his bounty enabled her to proceed to Newgate-market, where she purchased a quantity of pork, which she converted into sausages, and, with her daughter, set out to dispose of them, and proved eminently successful. In this affair she still continued to wear the dress of a man, but for a reason which she has never divulged ; perhaps protection.

When she had sunk into the condition of a sausage-dealer, and was in other respects so humiliated, it could hardly be imagined that she could fall lower ; but an accident taught her that the measure of her afflictions was not yet full. Soon after setting up in that capacity she fell into low health, insomuch that she was chiefly indebted

for assistance to her child, and though she restricted herself in every indulgence, she was still obliged to encroach on her slender finances, till she was reduced to her last three pounds of pork. These she left nicely prepared for sausages on a table covered up, while she went forth to breathe a little fresh air in the fields; but when she returned—oh, disastrous chance!—a hungry dog had most remorsefully entered and devoured all her remaining stock.

It would be to insult misery to indulge in the natural levity that this misfortune was calculated to excite; for though in itself it may seem to have been a slight mischance, it was to the sufferers a great distress. Mrs. Charke and her child stared at one another in silence; they sat down with despondency, conceiving that starvation must be their fate, having at that time neither meat, money, nor friends; their week's lodging would expire next day, and a regular visit from their landlord was inevitable.

After having sighed away her senses for her departed three pounds of pork, and thinking of her landlord, Mrs. Charke walked out, incapable of reflecting on her distress. She had not, however, proceeded far, when she met with an old gentlewoman, whom she had not seen for many years, who recognized her at once, and inquired why she was so sad and clothed in man's apparel: this having been explained discreetly, when they parted, the good lady slipped five shillings into her hand, on which she went home, paid her lodging, and next morning quitted it.

It has often been remarked, that if instances of kindness and magnanimity are to be sought for, they will chiefly be found among the poor and the friendless.

On retiring from her lodgings in the neighbourhood of Red-lion-square, this unfortunante woman had nowhere to lay her head ; all around, the world was a desert. In this helplessness a young woman, who was herself in indigent circumstances, invited the wretched mother and her child to take up their abode with her, and treated them with great charity at a time when, but for this beautiful instance of humane generosity, her child must have begged her bread ; for she was then herself ill of a fever of the mind, and incapable of lending her advice or assistance. After some days the senses of the miserable mother returned, and she made her situation known to the nobleman whom she had formerly served, who immediately sent her a piece of gold, and expressed concern and sympathy for her situation. From this time she gradually recovered.

At this period Mr. Yeates opened his new Wells, and she was engaged by him as a singer for a musical entertainment which he then brought forward. She subsequently obtained leave from Mr. Yeates to quit the Wells for four days, during which she appeared with great *éclat* at Bartholomew Fair.

Being thus again in obvious employment, her creditors became alert and importunate ; all she owed did not amount to five-and-twenty pounds, but it occasioned her as much perplexity as so many thousands. She was obliged to leave Mr. Yeates, to conceal herself from the eyes of those to whom she was indebted, and she retired to Petticoat-lane, Whitechapel, where she joined a master of legerdemain, and assumed the name of Brown. She, however, did not relish this life long, and, in her jeopardy, she addressed her uncle, imploring his aid, and en-

treating him to advance her as much money as would enable her to set up a public-house. In this affair she acted with her wonted frankness: she told him that she would not borrow the money, because it might never be repaid, she therefore fairly asked him for a gift, and she was not disappointed. He wrote to her to take a house, and that he would advance the requisite money.

She obeyed his directions, and being ever in a hurry from the hour of her birth, she took the first she saw with a bill on the window in Drury Lane—a house that had been irregularly and indecently kept. Her uncle was, however, as good as his promise: he advanced the money, and she posted away to her creditor who had a writ against her, which she settled, refusing, however, to pay costs. Having settled with him, she then flew to the brokers to buy household furniture; and, in less than three hours, her house was thoughtlessly furnished: but this affair was attended with so many extraordinary proceedings, that I cannot blame any one for being thrown into astonishment at her conduct. As soon as she had clustered an indistinguishable parcel of goods into her house, she resolved to sleep there that night. Beds were accordingly put up, but, by the time matters were in order, she was obliged to forego her intention, for it was near six o'clock in the morning. In other respects she managed not with more method; in two days the house was opened, and, according to custom on such occasions, she gave away an infinity of ham, and beef, and veal, to every soul who came and called for even a glass of brandy. In the course of twenty-four hours she ran out nearly seven pounds, and thought she was driving a roaring trade.

The next step which Charlotte made towards getting a large estate, was the profitable custom of several strolling-players, with whom, though they had no money, she thought herself obliged to deal liberally, (as they styled themselves comedians,) until they had it in their power to pay, which they one and all expected soon to do. She had also another expedient scarcely less salutary for making a fortune; she let three several rooms to as many persons, and some notion may be formed of their respectability by their fate—one of them narrowly escaped being hanged, another was reduced to common beggary, and the third was transported for life. This was not all. The water was laid into her cellar, and she never suspected that her tap ran as often as the water-cock: her beer was carried in pails to the two-pair of stairs floor, and the whole house was in a constant thunder-storm. Hints of what was going on began to glimpse out, and our heroine soon found that her lodgers had sometimes taken violent fancies to her very candlesticks and saucepans; that her pewter shrank, and her coals diminished; and that, as she kept an eating-house, there was often a hue and cry after an imaginary dog that ran away with three parts of a joint of meat. In a word, she was obliged to shut up shop; and going in her male attire to an old friend, she was, by her assistance, translated into a waiter at the King's-head, Mary-le-bone, then kept by a Mrs. Don.

Mrs. Don was at first greatly pleased with her appearance, but was fearful that her service would be too hard, and admonished her to seek a less robust employment. However, all her arguments were overturned by the plausible and good reasons of our heroine, who in the

end was accepted ; a little demur, however, arose, when she understood she had a child ; but this too, in the end, was overcome, and the waiter was admitted to her board. At last Sunday came round, and Mrs. Charke began to shake in her shoes, fearing that as the house was generally much frequented on that day, she might be discovered ; but all passed off well. In the week-days, business, though not so brisk as on Sundays, was still good, but it left her leisure to attend to the garden, in the work of which she showed so much sagacity that good Mrs. Don could not make enough of her ; in short, an indirect overture was made to her by a kinswoman of Mrs. Don, and marriage was only prevented by the fact of her being a woman coming to light.

She then attached herself to her brother, and having sown some of her wild oats, became a regular performer, and assisted to bring out her daughter. But the old man, Colley Cibber, who was greatly displeased, interfered to her prejudice.

Her distress and imprudence now took a new turn ; she was again reduced to great difficulties, but they were ultimately softened in their rigours by a present of a few pounds which she received from the Duke of Montague. After that she engaged herself at a guinea per diem to handle Punch at a puppet-show, which was kept by a Mr. Russel, for the higher classes, at Hickford's great room in Brewers-street,—a grand affair, some of the female figures being ornamented with real diamonds lent for that purpose by ladies of quality. This way of life was, however, like all others which she had pursued, evanescent ; Mr. Russel was arrested, thrown into prison, became insane, and finally an idiot. In this unfortunate situation, Mrs. Charke, hearing he was moved into the

Fleet, called one day to see him, and found, to her horror and consternation, that the unfortunate man was just laid in his coffin.

After the shock of this sad spectacle was over, she reproached the woman who had shown her up without telling her he was dead; but at the same time she expressed her thankfulness in seeing he was provided with so handsome a winding-sheet and coffin. "Oh, Madam," replied the prison-hag, "when a debtor dies without effects, he must be interred by the parish; your friend must be turned over to a parish-shell, for the indulgence of being buried otherwise renders the Warden of the Fleet liable for the debts of the deceased." This may have been the case, but surely the law cannot to this day be disgraced by the continuation of such an atrocity?

After leaving the prison and the corpse of her friend, and having dried her cheeks and eyes, it occurred to our heroine that his puppets might be had on reasonable terms, and that by them she could not fail to realize a handsome fortune; but on going to make an arrangement with his landlord, she found he had valued them at sixty guineas, money down, which was beyond her means, and so ended the scheme.

After this she remained about town till Bartholomew Fair was over, when she went into the country, and remained nearly nine years, the most remarkable of which were spent as a strolling-player, during which her daughter married one of the party, and in process of time came to be lady of an independent country company.

The sketches which Mrs. Charke gives of her adventures as a stroller are curiously amusing; odd and re-

markable in many particulars, they are yet not related without her characteristic humour. "I have seen," says she, "an Emperor as drunk as a Lord, and a Lord as elegant as a ticket-porter,—a Queen with one ruffle, and a Lord Townley without shoes. This last circumstance reminds me of the Queen, in *The Spanish Friar*, once playing without stockings, which, however, was caused by her own good-nature; her Majesty observing Torrismond to have a dirty pair with above twenty holes in sight, and her own legs not being so much exposed to view, kindly stripped them of a pair of fine cotton stockings, and lent them to the hero." This, however, is no overcharged picture of what often happens among strollers. I was once myself a witness to a three-legged pot-doing cauldron in *Macbeth*, and instead of sinking into the earth, according to the text, deliberately walking off, pulled by a string tied to one of its feet.

Being very unwell at Cirencester, she was advised, after getting a little better, to try horsemanship, and adopting this advice, she soon borrowed a horse for herself and another for her friend, the magnificent stockingless queen. The person who furnished the horses was a reverend-looking elder about sixty years of age, with beautiful curling hair, and a florid complexion, that bespoke admiration and respect. His temper was moral and pleasing, his aspect agreeable, and his company entertaining, with which he often obliged our heroine while her friend was at the theatre. After riding out two or three times, the old gentleman perceiving her to grow better, courteously made her a present of the horse, and persuaded a young fellow he called his nephew to give the other to her friend, and finally induced the two ladies to determine on leaving the

stage. But all this was deceit; it turned out that the horse-jockeys were old game. They were detected in their frauds, and in less than a year the old man was dangled into the other world, and the young one died raving mad in a prison near London.

From Cirencester the players went to Chippenham, and after experiencing the wonted disasters of the stroller's life, Mrs. Charke passed to Tiverton, in Devonshire, where she joined, with her friend and daughter, another party, under Mr. and Mrs. Elrington, with whom her success was only such as might be expected from their common poverty, and the expedients to which such adventurers are always reduced. It is, however, impossible to follow her through all the vicissitudes of a stroller's life, nor would they merit the reader's attention; they were with her as they have been with others, and are already sufficiently well known. The varieties of individual character may have produced cases of inflexion and exception, but the accidents which befell our heroine as a stroller were not of that kind; it is more in what happened to her when she was not a stroller that her fate is peculiar, and therefore I shall confine my attention chiefly to what may be regarded as her private adventures, rather than to those incidental to her profession, which, however, I must say, were abundantly eccentric of their kind, and sometimes full of humour. One, however, distressing enough at the time, I must not omit.

After traversing the country in the course of a second reunion with Mr. and Mrs. Elrington, they came to Minchin Hampton, where they were exposed to great jeopardy. At that time it happened the Coroner supported a relation in a most nefarious course of practice,

by apprehending all persons over whom he conceived the law gave him any authority; and this ridiculous power he carried to a most oppressive extent. Under it he committed the players to prison, and played so many fantastic tricks, that if he did not make the angels weep, he was often the cause of great vexation to those who fell into his clutches. In the end, by the assistance of the lord of the manor, Mrs. Charke and her friends esaped from his talons, but the troubles she had undergone made her resolve to quit the stage, and try some other course of life. This determination was forced upon her by the pressure of circumstances, but there was still little wisdom in the mode she proposed to carry it into effect.

With that discretion which distinguished her conduct through life, she resolved to settle at Chepstow, and turn pastrycook there, without a shilling in the universe! Accordingly, having taken a house in that town, she threw herself entirely on her friends, and moved onward in her scheme. An oven was constructed, but there was not a single penny to purchase a faggot to light it, and pies and their materials were equally scarce. However, nothing daunted, our heroine made her case known, and to baking she was enabled to go; and partly through pity and curiosity she absolutely took twenty shillings in the way of trade in the course of the first day. But the promise of this prosperity was only a glimpse of sunshine: the natural aspect of her fortunes was lowering; her courage however was not dismayed, even when this glimpse of brightness passed away.

She soon saw that she could not hope to succeed by her pastry, and she resolved to add to it another more lucrative branch of business. She went in one of her

hurries and bought a sow with pig, but after keeping it nearly three months, expecting it would bring forth, the brute proved to be an old barrow, and she was in consequence glad to sell it to a butcher for a shilling or two less than she originally gave for it. She had, however, by this time, to console her, a garden well stored with fruits of all kinds, which amply promised to indemnify her for the disappointment sustained by the sow; but just as the fruit was nearly ripe, a pack of wretches in one night robbed her garden and broke down many of her trees.

Finding she was not likely to succeed at Chepstow, she was assisted by some of her friends to remove with the necessary utensils for the pastrycook's shop to a little place called Pell, within five miles of the port of Bristol. The place itself is, according to her description, not unpleasant, but is inhabited, or rather infested, with the scum and dregs of the human race. "To be short," says she, "the villainies of these wretches are of so heinous and unlimited a nature, they render the place so unlike any other part of the habitable world, that I can compare it only to the antichamber of that abode in the next life we are admonished to avoid, by leading a good one here." And yet for nearly six months Mrs. Charke remained with her female companion in this place. Here she took a little shop, and being then in man's attire, and under the assumed name of Brown, she set out in a grand style, and put over her door in large, legible, permanent, and conspicuous characters and words at length,—“Brown, Pastrycook, from London.” But she declares, that in all the time she remained there, she could not charge herself with ever having attempted to spoil the ingredients of a single

tart. The summer-time, however, was the season of her trade, and she had no cause to complain; but when the blustering weather set in, had not an uncle of her friend died and left her a legacy, they would have been reduced to the most woful extremities.

On receiving this letter, it was shown to their landlord, hoping that he would lend Mrs. Charke a guinea to bear their charges to the relict of the deceased, who lived in Oxfordshire; but "the incredulous blockhead," as she says, conceived the letter was a forgery, and contrived as a device to get a guinea to run away with. He was, however, in error, and made a thousand awkward excuses for his unkindness when they had received the money. In the mean time, however, they were reduced to a sore pinch: still the bravery of our heroine was not to be subdued by adversity; she consulted on her pillow what was best to be done, and her friend agreed that what she had determined was the best, especially as there were only two little difficulties in the way. They agreed to go for the money, but, first, they had not a single groat between them in the world; and, secondly, Mrs. Charke was in want of a hat, in consequence of having pledged her's at Bristol,—for she went all this time as a man;—yet, notwithstanding these impediments, they resolved to set out together, and did so.

On reaching Bristol, Mrs. Charke, at the first word, though without her hat, raised enough to pay for their immediate wants, and she borrowed a covering for her unthinking head from a smart young journeyman who lived in the same house where they lodged for that night. Next day, at the hour of five, they set out for Bath, where they encountered some obstacles, which,

however, our heroine soon overcame, by giving her landlady her waistcoat for payment of her day's score ; she, however, redeemed it next morning by a contribution raised among the players.

Being thus empowered by the help of a little cash, the legatees set out from Bath for Oxfordshire, and in three days reached the happy spot where they were supplied, in the form of their legacy, with that opiate for grief of which the want had made many a tedious night wakeful. They then returned to Bristol, where they met with some of the Pell gentry, and learned that it was supposed they had run away. The borrowed hat was then returned to the owner ; our heroine released her own ; the landlord was paid his rent, and no creatures could be more honest ; but the legacy was exhausted, and, as Mrs. Charke says of herself, when it was so, she was no more regarded "than a dead cat." But still she was unsubdued.

She then sat down and wrote a little tale, which filled up the first and second columns of a newspaper, and got an acquaintance to introduce her to the printer, who engaged her, at a small pittance, to correct the press. Having thus secured something to fiddle on, she ran back from Bristol to Pell, exhorted her friend to come away, and leaving all to the landlord, to whom they were indebted eighteen shillings, she hastened to enter on her literary career.

It did not, however, last above a month, when finding it impossible to subsist on what she received, and the printer being unable to increase her wages, she applied to the players for a benefit. This proved an unlucky

speculation, for the house was filled with promises to overflowing, but instead of realizing five-and-twenty pounds, as she expected, she was involved to the extent of four or five pounds, and obliged to shift her camp without beat of drum.

She then joined her daughter's party at Wells, where she received a letter from her brother, informing her that Mr. Simpson, of Bath, was inclined to engage her as his prompter. This offer she embraced with avidity, and was kindly received, but the situation proved more troublesome than her health or temper could endure; she was obliged to give it up, and after several characteristic expedients, she set out by Devizes for London, and by a very devious course arrived there in due time, where she began the publication of her memoirs in numbers, on the 19th April 1755, ultimately resolving to open a magnificent academy for young persons ambitious of acquiring eminence on the stage. But, like all her other schemes, this was conceived without adequate consideration—indeed, it was conceived with less probability than some of her most absurd projects, and it of course fell to the ground.

What became of her for several years after is not very obvious, nor indeed till towards the close of her life, when we find her in possession of a public house at Islington. It is certain, that about the year 1755 she had prepared a novel for the press, and Mr. White of Dublin accompanied his friend, a bookseller, to hear her read it.

Her house was then a thatched hovel, in the purlieus of Clerkenwell Bridewell, on the way to Islington, not far from the New River head. Mr. White and his companion having at last reached her door, and being ad-

mitted by a domestic, a tall, meagre, ragged figure with a blue apron before her, who spoke with a solemn voice and a hungry smile. The first object that presented itself was a dresser, clean it must be confessed, and furnished with three or four delf plates, and underneath an earthen pipkin, and a black pitcher with a snip out of its mouth. To the right of the dresser sat the mistress of the mansion, on a maimed chair, under the mantelpiece, with a fire sufficient to put her visitors in mind of starvation. On one hob sat a monkey chattering, on the other a tabby cat of a melancholy aspect, and on the founce of his lady's dingy petticoat reclined a dog, almost only the skeleton of one. He raised his shaggy head, and staring with bleared eyes, saluted the strangers with a snarl. A magpie was perched on her chair, and on her lap lay a mutilated pair of bellows; their pipe was gone, but they served as a succedaneum for a writing-desk, on which lay displayed her hopes in the shape of the manuscript of her novel. Her ink-stand was a broken tea-cup; her pen was worn to the stump,—she had but one. A rough deal board, with three supporters, was brought for the convenience of the visitors, and after they were accommodated, they entered upon business.

The work was read—and she read it beautifully—remarks were made, and thirty guineas demanded for the copyright. The squalid hand-maiden looked with astonishment at the amount of the demand. The extortionate bookseller, offered five pounds; some altercation ensued, but after it the man of trade doubled his offer: matters in the end were duly accommodated; the lady stipulating for fifty copies in addition to the money. This appears to have been the last important

transaction of her many-coloured life, nor indeed did she live very long afterwards, for she died on the 6th of April 1760.

Biography presents few cases similar to the extraordinary life of Mrs. Charke,—a person of considerable talent, quick in the perception of impropriety in others, but entirely under the government of the most irrational impulses. The English language affords no fit term to describe her conduct, but the Scottish has a word appropriate in DAFT.

MRS. GEORGE ANNE BELLAMY.

THIS lady is as much celebrated by her letters concerning herself, as by her professional excellence, and yet they are generally believed to have been written by Alexander Bicknell, better known as the editor of Carver's Travels in Africa. They are not, however, spurious; she is supposed to have furnished the materials, and must be held responsible for the chronological errors which impair their merit. She was born in the town of Fingal in Ireland, on St. George's day, 1731, and was baptized by the name of Georgiana; but after she had grown up, it was discovered that she was entered in the parish register as having been christened George Anne. Though she bore the name of her mother's husband, she was really the child of Lord Tyrawley, and born under circumstances which justify me in saying, that her adventures began before she came into the world.

Her mother was the daughter of a wealthy farmer in the neighbourhood of Maidstone, and after some distressing family affairs, was placed at a boarding-school in Queen Square, London, by Mrs. Godfrey, a sister of the great Duke of Marlborough, whence she was induced to elope with Lord Tyrawley, a young, accomplished, but dissipated nobleman.

Having carried his prize to his apartments in Somerset

House, she was treated with the same respect as if she had been really married to his Lordship, and actually assumed his name. She had not, however, been long in this illusion, when his Lordship was ordered to join his regiment in Ireland. Their parting was becomingly pathetic, for they had given all for love; but as soon as he reached Dublin, he found it expedient to pay his addresses to a daughter of the Earl of Blessington, to mend his shattered fortunes, and married her. In this, having acted without principle, the Earl was so indignant when he came to hear the truth, that he would make no settlement on them, and Tyrawley was justly disappointed. Being, however, a young man of talent, he solicited public employment, and was sent Ambassador to Lisbon. There, after the lapse of two years, the mother of our heroine joined him, and on her arrival was placed by his Lordship in the family of an English merchant, where she received the visits of his Lordship, and where, being unacquainted that he had solaced himself with another mistress, her time passed in agreeable tranquillity. It happened, however, that a Captain Bellamy, master of a ship consigned to the merchant, happened to become so enamoured of her, that he won her heart chiefly by informing her of the minister's new mistress; and in revenge she accepted his hand, and sailed with him as the legal Mistress Bellamy to Ireland. Soon, however, after their arrival, she gave birth, greatly to his astonishment, to our heroine, for he had never suspected that there had been an intimacy to such an effect with Lord Tyrawley!

His Lordship believing that Mrs. Bellamy had run away to Ireland without tie, and in the wantonness of nature, and expecting that a child might be born to him,

ordered it immediately on its birth to be taken from her. Ultimately, when about two years old, George Anne was carried to the barracks at Dublin, by the lady of the Adjutant of his Lordship's regiment, in whose care she had been placed; and when she had nearly attained the age of four years, the Adjutant received directions from Lord Tyrawley to send her to France.

Whilst in London, in the way to the Continent, the maid-servant who had the care of her, happening to see her mother's name in the playbills of Covent Garden, thought she could not be an unacceptable visitor, if she took the child to pay her respects to her. Accordingly, they went to Mrs. Bellamy's lodgings; but on running delighted to her mother, the actress, for Mrs. Bellamy was now on the stage, pushed away the child, exclaiming, after looking at her, "My God! what have you brought me here? This goggle-eyed, splatter-faced, gabbart-mouthed wretch is not my child! Take her away."

After a few necessary preparations, Miss Bellamy was placed at Boulogne, in the Convent of the Nunciates, in the lower town, where she had not been long when a nun was buried in the walls for incontinency. Every reader recollects so well the striking description of this fearful ceremony of punishment, in the poem of *Marmion*, that it need not be described here; but so horrid a penalty, and the dirtiness of the house, occasioned our heroine to be removed to the Ursulines, in the upper town, where she remained till she had reached her eleventh year, at which period she was brought to England.

On reaching Dover, she was met by one Duvall, who had once been a domestic of Lord Tyrawley, and with

whom she was to reside during the absence of his Lordship, who was still abroad, but every day expected. This Duvall had a neighbour of the name of Jones, who, at the solicitations of his wife, had opened a china-shop. Mrs. Jones was the daughter of an apothecary in Westminster, and was well versed in the fashions and amusements of the gay world. Having received a genteel education, she spoke French badly, of course, and could invent with great facility interesting additions to the lies of the day. She had a good address, abounded in small-talk, understood flattery charmingly; and all her female customers were, in consequence, delighted with this fascinating lady.

Our heroine, during her frequent visitations to the shop of Mrs. Jones, became acquainted with most of the nobility who frequented it. But this pleasure was at length disturbed by the long-wished-for arrival of Lord Tyrawley.

His Lordship received his daughter in the kindest manner, but his Portuguese mistress, who had several children of her own, became her enemy, so obviously, that the acute young lady perceiving the nature of Donna Aura's heart, persuaded his Lordship to place her again with Mrs. Jones, where every thing went happily for some time, until she became indisposed; when Lord Tyrawley, for the benefit of fresh air, was induced on her account to take a little box in Bushy Park, to which he removed his whole family, consisting of his Lordship, his tawny Dulcinea, three girls, all by different mothers, and George Anne. The boys were sent to school.—Here his Lordship's fondness for her became unbounded. He thought he could discern in her features a perfect resemblance of himself, and anticipated when her wit

would become as brilliant as his own, for he was acknowledged in that respect to possess uncommon talent.

Lord Tyrawley having prohibited George Anne from reading *Cassandra*, the only romance in his library, she laid her hands on Pope's *Homer*, and learnt the first three books by rote, when she solicited his Lordship to introduce her to the author—as Pope of Twickenham should deservedly be considered. This he indulgently, after many applications, consented to do. The day was fixed; away they went to the poet's dwelling, she full of great anticipations, and big with the thought of the important part she was to perform. The carriage stopped, the door was opened, and they were ushered into the presence of the great man, who, immediately on seeing her, rang the bell. The housekeeper answered it—"Take Miss," said Pope, "show her the gardens, and give her as much fruit as she can eat!"

Such a result humbled the young lady beyond all measure; she was wroth with the innocent housekeeper, who did not remain long with her, but left her to devise a most effectual plan of revenge, no less than a resolution never to read the poet's works again, but wholly to attach herself to Dryden's translation of *Virgil*. While ruminating on this great machination, the carriage was announced, and on reaching it she found seated, with Lord Tyrawley, the famous Earl of Chesterfield; and his Lordship's piquant conversation amply repaid her in the way to Bushy Park for all the contumely she had sustained from the poet.

Some time after, Lord Tyrawley being appointed Ambassador to Russia, one of the ladies of quality with whom she had formed an acquaintance at the shop of Mrs. Jones, invited her, during his Lordship's absence,

to stay with her: an invitation gladly accepted, and to which his Lordship readily consented, on condition that she should not see her mother. But he had not been long on his mission, when, enticed by the maid by whom she had been originally introduced to her mother, she left her splendid associations to reside with her. Lord Tyrawley immediately stopped his allowance for her support. This decided her destiny, and her imprudent mother saw, when it was too late, that she had sacrificed the permanent interests of her child. Perhaps, humanely speaking, there was, after all, less to blame on her part than in the proud sternness of the father. Impatience was the greatest fault, both of the mother and daughter—as it is of the unfortunate of mankind in general; for, although it cannot be denied that there is a good luck in destiny, it is no less true that, if a man can afford to wait, he will in the end attain his desires.

Among other friendships which the mother had formed about this period, was an intercourse of a very intimate kind with a Mrs. Jackson, who had come from India for the education of her daughters, and who resided at Twickenham. She invited Mrs. Bellamy and her daughter to spend some time with her, and the invitation was accepted. One day, while staying with this lady, she happened to be walking with our heroine, when they met Mrs. Woffington, the distinguished actress, who immediately renewed a theatrical acquaintance with Mrs. Bellamy, and invited them both to spend some time with her at her house at Teddington. During their stay with her, Miss Bellamy formed some acquaintance with the most eminent actors of that time; and while the two ladies remained with Mrs. Woffing-

ton, a play was got up. The piece was *The Distressed Mother*, and the part of Andromache fell to our heroine, in which she acquitted herself with distinction; but, as this was not an appearance on a public stage, it is proper to reserve what is requisite to be said of her powers until that event.

Upon returning to Twickenham, they found their friend Mrs. Jackson so ill that her physician advised her to change the air, and she removed, in consequence, to Henrietta Street, where the mother and daughter consented to become her guests. At this period the former had occasion frequently to call on Rich the manager, on business, and when she did was always accompanied by George Anne, between whom and his daughters an agreeable intimacy was formed.

One evening the young ladies, among themselves, proposed to act *Othello*, and our heroine was to play the Moor. In due time, accordingly, their preparations reached a rehearsal; and, as they were only amusing themselves, Miss Bellamy gave full scope to her voice, and was overheard by Mr. Rich, who declared he had never heard a better; and, among other compliments, told her, that if she would turn her thoughts to the stage, she would make one of the best actresses in the world, and he would be happy to engage her. Mr. Rich, however, like the ordinary managers of the theatre, was not an eminent judge; indeed, it was the opinion of the players, that he was not a judge at all, but was only one of those sort of people who get into certain situations no one can explain how. This eulogium, however, had the effect, in her deserted condition, of turning her attention to the stage as a means of subsistence. Indeed, when the tenour and tendency of her fortunes are con-

sidered, it seems as if no series of events ever more obviously dovetailed into each other than those of her life, to accomplish that consummation. She consulted with her mother upon what Mr. Rich had said, and the result, in a short time after, was an engagement with him, concluded when she was just fourteen.

At that time her figure was elegant, and her voice powerful; gay, light, and graceful, of inexhaustible spirits, and possessed of some humour, the happiest auguries promised her success, and in the character of Monimia, then a favourite with the public, she came out under the auspices of youth, beauty, and emulation.

Being prepared for her part, Rich thought the time was now arrived when he should introduce her to Quin. After waiting some time at the mouth of the lion's den, as the other performers denominated Mr. Quin's dressing-room, they were at length admitted; for, except with Ryan, he kept himself aloof from the other players, and seldom mixed with them but in professional duty.

Quin no sooner heard Rich propose that Miss Bellamy should appear in the character of Monimia, than, with the most sovereign contempt, he cried out, "It will not do, Sir;" upon which Rich, surprised at his plainness, retorted, "It shall do, Sir." After some farther pungent altercation, Quin said to her, "Child, I would advise you to play Serina before you think of Monimia." This sarcasm nettled her, and she animatedly replied, "If I did, Sir, I should never live to play the Orphan." Still, however, he insisted on the impropriety of a child attempting the character, and concluded with threatening, that if Rich persisted in his resolution, he would declare to the public his opinion, and would not attend

the rehearsals. To reason with Quin was unavailing after he had committed himself so far, and Rich led the trembling novice away, cheering her, however, aloud, that let who would oppose, he was resolved to protect her. Nor was his wonted indolence in this case to blame: before leaving the theatre he ordered the prompter to call a rehearsal of *The Orphan* next morning. When the time arrived, the two gentlemen who were to play the lovers, in order to pay their court to Quin, did not think proper to appear; but Rich, justly offended, fined them more than usual: even Serina smiled with derision on the lovely young Monimia.

Such things often happen, and in other professions as well as in the players.' Mankind are more guided by their predilections for or against one another than they are willing to allow; they render the path to distinction easier to those they happen to favour, and more difficult to those they chance to dislike, than justice can warrant. Hence it is, that we sometimes see those who have been honoured for their prematurity, afterwards sink, to be heard of no more, long before they naturally die; and others in great splendour at their setting, who have all day travelled in clouds and obscurity.

Rich was mortified at seeing his protégée treated with such contempt; but luckily the unjust opposition evinced towards her, only angered him into greater determination to adhere to his resolution, and he adopted the best means of making it effectual.

The dresses of the theatrical ladies were at this period indifferent: empresses and queens were confined to black velvet, except on extraordinary occasions, when they put on embroidered petticoats; the young ladies generally appeared in the cast garments of people of quality; and

sometimes stage brides and virgins in faded dresses. Rich, however, on this occasion, to put Miss Bellamy in good-humour, and to compensate for the affront she had received, took her to his mercer's, and gave her leave to choose a dress for herself. The following morning, Castalio and Polidore attended the rehearsal, but Chamont (Quin) was inexorable.

The public, always inclined to the humane side, espoused the cause of our injured heroine as soon as the treatment she had met with was known, and became indignant at the conspiracy against her, for they attributed all that she had suffered to a machination of that kind.

The important night, big with the fate of Miss Bellamy, at length arrived; the curtain drew up, and a splendid audience were assembled; but she was so dazzled by the lights, and stunned by the plaudits, that she stood for some time like a statue. Quin exulted at her confusion, and Rich, astonished at the effect, entreated her to exert herself. She tried, but could not be heard in the side boxes. The applause continued during the first act. The manager, having pledged himself for her success, had planted friends in different parts of the house to insure it; but finding her unable to recover her self-possession, he was distracted, as if his own fate had depended upon her. Again he had recourse to persuasion; but nothing could rouse her, till the fourth act, when, to the amazement of the audience, the surprise of the other performers, and the exultation of the manager, she felt herself suddenly awakened, and burst out with great splendour. Quin was so astonished at this unexpected display, that, with his wonted generosity of nature, he waited behind the scenes till the conclusion of the act, when, lifting her from the ground, he exclaimed

aloud, "Thou art a divine creature, and the true spirit is in thee." Her triumph was complete; the other performers, who, half an hour before, regarded her with pity, crowded around, and loaded her with gratulations; and Quin, in contrition for his sarcasm, finding she was the reputed daughter of his old friend Lord Tyrawley, inclosed a bank-bill in a blank cover, and sent it by the penny post to her mother; besides favouring the young lady with a general invitation to his suppers, enjoining her at the same time never to come alone, because, as he jocularly said, he was not too old to be spared from censure.

The ordinary chances incident to the profession facilitated her rise; and the acquisition of friends among people of rank was the consequence. Rich could not afford her a salary equal to the success she had met with, but he gave her a free benefit; which, however, as she had but few friends, except those who, out of civility to Mr. Quin, espoused her cause, she had little reason to expect would prove lucrative. Sometime, however, before the day appointed, she received a message from the Duchess of Queensberry to come to her Grace next day before twelve o'clock. But when she announced herself at Queensberry House, the groom of the chambers told her that the Duchess knew no such person. She assured him that by her Grace's own directions she had called; he replied that there must have been some mistake, and with humiliation she returned home, expecting to receive taunts and sarcasms from a relation who had lately arrived from Ireland, and who had afterwards considerable influence on her destiny. Accordingly, she had no sooner returned from Queensberry House, and mentioned her reception, than this relation alleged that the invitation was a chimera of her own brain, generated by her

vanity; so virulent, indeed, were the deformed old lady's sarcasms, that Miss Bellamy, to shun her, went to the theatre. Upon entering the green-room, she was met by Prince Lobkowitz, requesting a box at her benefit for the corps diplomatique; she thanked him for the honour, and informed his Highness they might be accommodated with a stage-box. But he acquainted her that she had not a box to dispose of; all but three private ones being retained for the Duchess of Queensberry. Our heroine thought the Prince was joking, especially as he had delivered to her the message from her Grace the night before, and which she had found a deception. He, however, persisted in what he said, and farther added, that the Duchess had sent for two hundred and fifty tickets. With this glad news she hastened home to tell her mother, and to retaliate upon her crooked relation, when she found a note from her Grace, requesting her to come next morning to Queensberry House. Having walked thither, she was immediately admitted to the Duchess, who said, "Well, young woman, what business had you in a chair yesterday? it was a fine morning, and you might have walked. You look as you ought to do now (observing her linen gown); nothing is so vulgar as wearing silk in a morning: simplicity best becomes youth, and you do not stand in need of ornament; therefore dress always plain, except when you are upon the stage."

While her Grace was thus talking, she was cleaning a picture, which Miss Bellamy observing, requested permission to do. "Don't you think I have domestics enough, if I did not choose to do it myself?" said the Duchess. Miss Bellamy apologized for her presumption, by telling her Grace that she had acquired some proficiency in the art while she had been at Mrs. Jones's.

The Duchess upon this exclaimed, "Are you the girl I have heard Chesterfield speak of?" Being answered in the affirmative, she ordered a canvass bag to be taken from her cabinet, saying, "No person can give Queensberry less than gold; there are two hundred and fifty guineas, and twenty for the Duke's tickets and mine. But I must give you something for Tyrawley's sake." She then took a bill from her pocket-book, which she put into Miss Bellamy's hands, and told her, that a carriage was ordered to take her home, lest any accident should happen to her. The benefit, with this and other helps, surpassed her most sanguine expectations.

Among others who paid her particular attention was Lord Byron, who had little to boast of but his title and a fair face. He was offended at her rejection of his addresses, and resolved to be revenged; for this purpose he engaged another nobleman to assist him, who was only distinguished for his profligacy. This associate had believed himself to be in love with a young lady, a friend of our heroine, and frequently, in consequence, called on Miss Bellamy. Her mother, who by this time had left the stage, and was become a confirmed devotee, enjoined her to break off her intimacy with that young lady, on account of her levity; and because, though by birth a gentlewoman, she had degraded herself by becoming the companion of a lady of quality who had eloped from her lord. Lord Byron's noble friend, knowing the religious predilections of Mrs. Bellamy, came one Sunday evening, when he knew she would be engaged, and said to our heroine that her friend was in a coach at the end of the street, and desired to speak with her. Without staying to put on her hat or gloves, she hastened to the coach, when, to her surprise, she was

suddenly hoisted into it by his Lordship, who, jumping in after, was driven off as fast as the horses could gallop.

The Earl conveyed her to his own house ; and in answer to her remonstrance for the manner in which she had been abducted, assured her of Lord Byrons' benevolent intentions ; implored her compassion for his friend ; and, having left her with his housekeeper, went out to prepare a lodging for her. Soon after he returned, and, to her astonishment, with one of her brothers, a lieutenant in the navy, who believing at the time she had run off with the Right Honourable pander, inflicted a severe bodily chastisement on him, and immediately retired.

Such is the substance of her own account of the matter ; but it deserves to be noticed, that she went afterwards with the Earl to the lodgings he had taken for her, which happened to be in the house of her own dress-maker, and it does not appear that she made any attempt to return home. Seeing, however, an account of the transaction much exaggerated in the newspapers next day, she wrote to her mother the facts of the case, who returned her letter unopened. This sealed her doom ; she became unwell ; incurred debts to her lodging-keeper ; and was obliged, in consequence, to go to her mother's relations, quakers, under the pretence of claiming a legacy which had been left to her some time before. In this journey, being led to dress neatly and plainly, she was regarded by them as a quaker. They, however, soon discovered her real character, and she was induced to leave them, even though their returning affection ought to have softened her indignation at those reports to her disadvantage, reports to which they had lent, as she thought, too credulous an ear. From them she went to Ingateston, to spend some time with a young lady, an

acquaintance, who had invited her ; and not finding her friend at home, in her forlornness she boarded herself with a farmer.

While she resided with the farmer, she often wrote to her mother, but could obtain no answer, and her spirits in consequence were again saddened. Exceedingly depressed, she one evening walked out alone, with " Mrs. Rowe's Letters from the Dead to the Living," which she read till they infected her mind, and she returned towards the house in superstitious dejection. In this condition she beheld, as she deemed it, an apparition of her parent coming towards her ; at the sight, she immediately fancied that her mother was dead, and was coming to upbraid her as the cause of her death. But if the spirit did intend to do so, it was a most unjust ghost, and different from all others ; for ghosts are always remarkable for their love of justice. However, it advanced, and our heroine became terrified, till the vision clasped her in its arms, and proved a real mother. It seems the deformed relation from Ireland had recently died, and that all Miss Bellamy's letters were discovered to have been in her possession, concealed from the disconsolate parent. It is surprising so many of such tricks should be found out by the same means ; persons who have an interest in concealing the letters of others should be sure always to burn them.

When the two actresses had eased their labouring hearts in mutual explanation, the old lady related that Mrs. Jackson had married indiscreetly an Irishman, and that their home in London was in consequence broken up ; finally, having no other alternative, it was arranged between them that our heroine should return to the stage. Accordingly, on coming back to London, Mrs.

Bellamy went towards Covent Garden to concert the proper measures with Mr. Rich, when she met Mr. Sheridan, the father of the orator, who inquired for George Anne, and expressed a wish to engage her, but to this she could not consent until she had previously seen Mr. Rich. That gentleman, when she had told him what had passed with the Dublin manager, advised her to accept his offer, for the young lady would have not only the benefit in him of a great master in dramatic elocution, but the privilege of appearing, even though so young, in every principal character; an advantage she could not expect in London, where the principal parts were considered as much the property of the performers as their weekly salary, and were only lent to novices for a trial of their skill. This advice was undoubtedly disinterested and judicious, but we are much inclined to doubt the fairness of the practice on which it was founded. There appears no reason, after a literary work has been published, to suppose that the writer has any authority longer over its knowledge; it is then public property, and free to be appropriated as all readers may think fit: this opinion is not, however, willingly acceded to by authors, who for the most part imagine that they possess an everlasting surveillance over their own works, and a right to control the use which others may make of them. It is much in the same way that actors endeavour to maintain their doctrine of a property in characters, to which they can in justice lay no higher claim than that they had previously taken the pains to get them by heart. By the advice of Rich, however, Miss Bellamy, instead of attempting to differ from what was then the established custom of the stage, was induced to accede to the proposal of Mr. Sheridan, and

went with her mother to Dublin ; where, after a pleasant journey, not remarkable for any incident which deserves to be narrated here, save in a Mr. Crump professing love for her, with whom in the course of the journey they happened to fall in, they arrived in safety.

In Dublin, our heroine waited in duty on Mrs. O'Hara, the sister of Lord Tyrawley, who had not seen her since she was an infant, and who was much pleased with her visit, without, however, being satisfied with the profession to which she had been driven. But she agreed to introduce her to her acquaintances as the acknowledged daughter of her brother. Mrs. O'Hara kindly inquired into the state of her finances, which gave her an opportunity of describing the eccentric liberality of the Duchess of Queensberry, with which she was naturally much entertained. She informed her also of the adventure with Lord Byron and his friend, which had been the cause of her distress. In this frankness there was much discretion, for the good opinion of no one is to be gained by half candour—a friend must be trusted with the secrets of the heart, as a physician, or a lawyer, with the defects as well as the rights of a case.

The theatre opened with éclat, and the court was brilliant, for the Earl of Chesterfield was at that time Viceroy of Ireland. Miss Bellamy became a public favourite, and was obliged to appear almost every night ; but her ambition to excel was as great as her desire of distinction, and she studied with assiduity, even anxiously, in order to be found worthy of the public approbation. She was, however, destined always to endure some repulsive mortification when she had a just claim for fame or indulgence. In her agreement with Mr. Sheridan, she had stipulated, in the proud consciousness of her own

powers, that she should perform Constance in *King John*,—a part unsuitable to her years. Garrick, being in Dublin at the same time, however, objected to this, and ultimately Miss Bellamy was rejected for the part. This was a breach of her engagement; she told the circumstances to one of her father's fashionable relations, by whom she was much patronized, and the spirit of aristocracy was roused. The lady, who cherished a great partiality for Garrick, indignant at the treatment which her young friend suffered from his prejudice, requested her acquaintance not to go to the theatre that night. As her friends and visitors were numerous, and she was popular among the young gentry for the balls she gave, her request took great effect, and when the play was performed the house was very thin.

In London alone the profession is independent of individual influence: such an interference would there but only have brought a fuller or more noisy house. In this, however, Miss Bellamy's relation acted properly, for her young friend was evidently the victim of professional jealousy; and it was spirited to convince the players, by the exercise of her power, that after all their fretting and strutting on the stage, they were only the puppets of rank and the toys of recreation.

The effect was humiliating to Garrick, and still more when Miss Bellamy afterwards was brought out in Constance, and the house could not receive the numerous audience who sought admission. The event gave her fresh energy, and not being altogether pure from the vixen, she resolved to be revenged; accordingly, when one of Garrick's benefits came round, for he was to have two in the course of the season, he chose for the first *Jane Shore*, and applied to Miss Bellamy to play the

part, but she would not, assigning for her reason the same that he had employed when he opposed her Constance, namely, she was too young. On this occasion he wrote her a note, which he intended to be most jocular, but which exposed him to the laughter of all Dublin—the Niagara of that sort of cataract. In this note he told her, that “if she would oblige him, he would write her a goody, goody epilogue; which, with the help of her eyes, should do more mischief than ever the flesh or the Devil had done since the world began.” This epistle he directed “To my soul’s idol, the beautified Ophelia,” and sent his servant with it; but he having some amusement for himself to pursue, gave it to a porter in the street, and the porter upon reading the superscription, and not knowing any lady in the whole city who bore the title either of “my soul’s idol,” or “the beautified Ophelia,” concluded it was to answer some jocular purpose. He, therefore, carried it to his master, and by his means it got the next day into the newspapers, and set all Dublin in a roar.

When a reconciliation with Garrick had been effected, Miss Bellamy’s mother took a furnished house at the sheds of Clontarf for some time, where they resided till the winter, but Miss was a frequent visitor to the city. On one occasion she afforded the public some amusement which they had not bargained for. At a concert she happened to be seated next to Lord Chief Baron Bower, when a stranger, entering into conversation with his Lordship, remarked, that his daughter (meaning Miss Bellamy) was vastly like him. *The Merchant of Venice* was then reviving at the theatre, and she instantly made particular observations on his Lordship, to adopt in her part of Portia. In this she succeeded so happily,

that when she made her appearance as the learned doctor from Padua, the audience simultaneously cried out, "Here comes the young Lord Chief Baron;" a title she retained during her residence in Ireland.

Some of the little professional anecdotes of our heroine are piquant, and one of the best is an adventure, of which Mrs. Furnival was the cause. Early in the season *All for Love, or the World well Lost*, was prepared for representation; Miss Bellamy was to perform Cleopatra, and Mrs. Furnival Octavia. It happened that the Queen got a new splendid dress for the occasion, made out of a suite of silver tissue which had belonged to the Princess of Wales, and that she had many borrowed jewels to make it the more gorgeous. The paraphernalia were left in her dressing-room at the theatre by her servant, who neglected to close the door. Mrs. Furnival, in passing, beheld the glittering attire, and carrying it away, put it on, so that Miss Bellamy was obliged to appear in a plain garb of white satin. In the mean time her servant, missing the dress, ran about like a mad creature, till she was informed that Mrs. Furnival had got it on, with whom she had an immediate battle. This, however, was not all: when Cleopatra appeared in her plain dress, the audience were astonished; and when Mrs. Furnival came on, one of the ladies who had lent her jewels exclaimed aloud, on seeing her, "The woman has got my diamonds!" The gentlemen in the pit, on hearing this, concluded that she had been robbed, and the consternation which ensued is not to be described; at length Mrs. Furnival was obliged to retire for the evening.

About this period Garrick had purchased a half-share in the patent of Drury Lane, and the sound of Miss

Bellamy's success in the Irish metropolis having reached him, he wished to engage her for the next London season, and made her an offer of ten pounds a week, which, however, she declined. Soon after, terror, arising from one of those accidents to which ladies on the stage are sometimes liable from the impertinence of young men, brought on a slight illness which interrupted her performance, but on her recovery she re-appeared.

In this juncture of her story Miss Bellamy gives some interesting description of the humour of the Irish. It belongs, indeed, almost exclusively to the memoirs of the players, to furnish accounts of popular public manners; but though the sketches of our heroine are written with vivacity, some of them are too circumstantial to be transposed into these pages; still, to the student of man and nations, the characteristics they afford are curious, and it is impossible to look on her pictures without becoming sensible that the Irish character has as many peculiarities which distinguish it from that of the English, as features do individuals from one another. The people undoubtedly, from some constitutional exuberance, have more enjoyment in confusion and riot than their friends on this side the channel, and in consequence, perhaps, they are less just; but still a strong vein of generosity runs through all their pranks.

At the close of the season our heroine resolved to return to London, and was the more induced to hasten her departure from Dublin, as Lord Tyrawley was coming from Russia to see his sister Mrs. O'Hara, then blind and in decaying health. It was impossible to leave a country, however, where she had received so much kindness

from her relations and applause from the public, without regret.

On reaching London, her mother informed Garrick of their arrival, and they were received by him with the kind cheerfulness of his character, while he expressed his sorrow that the state of his company prevented him from engaging our heroine. Quin was at this time in Bath, but Rich renewed his friendship, and received them at his house in the country with undiminished regard. At length she was announced for the character of Belvidera, but instead of a full house, as she expected, it was far otherwise: her reception, however, was flattering, and when another play was given out for the following evening, the audience cried out for a repetition of *Venice Preserved*, which continued attractive to the end of the season.

One evening, when she was performing *Athenais* in *Theodosius*, she had scarcely come upon the stage when the first object she saw was Lord Byron, who had placed himself in the stage-box. The sight of his Lordship deprived her of all power, and she stood for some time motionless. Rich and his family saw her tremour from their box, and he came round to her assistance. Lord Byron had by this time quitted his place, and was leaning against one of the side-scenes when the manager entered. On seeing him his Lordship said, "Well, Rich, I am come to take away your *Athenais*;" but the manager reproved him for so avowing his unjustifiable design, and remonstrated with him for alarming her, adding with firmness, "I desire, my Lord, that you will quit the scenes, for I cannot stand tamely by and see my performers insulted." His Lordship, not choosing to resent the lecture, retired to his seat in the stage-box,

but he was no sooner there than the audience, to whom the story of Miss Bellamy was not unknown, obliged him to seek another part of the house. Quin was not at the theatre that evening, but he heard of her adventure, and Thomson the poet also being informed of it, came to the house. As Thomson passed near the back of the stage, he heard two persons in conversation, one of whom said to the other, "I will speak to her to-night, or I will shoot ——" Thomson could catch no more, but he concluded it could be no other than Lord Byron thus uttering his designs to a friend. The poet of "The Seasons" immediately told Quin, who by this time had come, what he had heard, and he said to the lady, "Madam, we must have no chairing of it to-night, you must go home under my arm."

When she was undressed he ordered her chair to be brought from the stage-door, with all the curtains drawn, into the passage, that it might be supposed she was actually in it, whilst they walked together through the house, and reached her mother's in safety.

When the chairmen soon after arrived, they mentioned that they had been stopped on the way by a man muffled up in a great coat, who lifted up the top of the chair and threw something into it. This excited much curiosity; Quin ordered the letter to be taken out, and it proved to be from a young gentleman different from the individual suspected. They then sat down to supper, but just as they were seated, a waiter from the Bedford Head-tavern brought a letter. The scrawl came from Lord Byron, who, though lately married to one of the best and loveliest of her sex, made Miss Bellamy an offer of a settlement. Quin, as soon as he had read it, called for pen and ink, and sent the following answer:—

“Lieutenant O'Hara's compliments to Lord Byron, and if he ever dares to insult his sister again, it shall not be either his title or his cowardice that shall preserve him from chastisement.” Next morning the valiant nobleman set off for Newstead Abbey, and troubled her no more; but, nevertheless, her headlong destiny was not to be arrested.

Next evening, as soon as her part on the stage was over, Quin, with pleasure sparkling in his eyes, desired her to kneel to the first person she met in the scene-room. It was her father, Lord Tyrawley: their meeting was affecting, and his Lordship requested her to hasten home, as Quin and he intended to sup with her; and though her mother was never present with his Lordship, he appeared in every other respect kindly disposed to the welfare of his daughter. About this period she became deeply enamoured of Mr. Metham, and soon after, as she regarded him as her husband-to-be, she freely accepted his presents; but in the mean time her evil genius was at work, for as soon as her benefit was over, Lord Tyrawley, much to her surprise, came to her, and insisted that she should accept the hand of Mr. Crump, the gentleman already mentioned. This she refused; high words arose between them; and the result was that she eloped with Mr. Metham. This decided her fate. She accompanied him to York, where for some time they lived together as man and wife. While there, a nobleman who had a horse to run for the race-plate, was at their house for some days, during which, at dinner, he sat at her right hand, and much to her annoyance kept his eye constantly and steadily fixed on her. At first she took no particular notice of this, being accustomed to receive many instances of homage to her

charms in impudent staring ; but so marked a manner at last forced her to speak of it to Mr. Metham, who laughingly informed her of the fact, that she was frightened by an innocent glass-eye.

Towards the end of the year she was delivered of a child, the birth of which almost cost her her life, but it was the means of reconciling her to her mother, and, when scarcely recovered, she was urged to return to London, and to accept an advantageous engagement. It was not, however, till the beginning of February that they could leave York ; but on her arrival she was received with more public favour than she had ventured to expect.

It would seem that the intercourse between people of rank and the players was at this time in a remarkable state. The great received theatrical persons only as means of amusement, and were very little scrupulous about their personal reputation, even while they treated them apparently in the most condescending manner. At the approach of our heroine's benefit she received a card desiring her to attend next day on the Prince and Princess of Wales. So flattering a distinction was of course duly appreciated. While she was with their Royal Highnesses, an instance of innate good-breeding occurred which well deserves to be ever recorded. The Duchess of Chandos was present. This beautiful lady had been elevated from the lowest obscurity to her station, and no great opinion was entertained of her mind or endowments, but an incident occurred which served to show the natural superiority of her feeling : the sun happened to shine full on the Princess, and was exceedingly troublesome, upon which the Duchess, with inimitable gracefulness, crossed the drawing-room, and having

let down the curtain, returned to her place. The thoughtfulness and the elegance of the manner in which this was done were much admired, and added to the renown which her beauty had spread abroad.

The royal party chose a play for our heroine's benefit, but the death of the Prince took place before it could be performed, and the theatres were in consequence closed.

Whatever may have been the personal fascinations of Mr. Metham, by which our heroine was so enchanted, he was entirely in the clutches of one dreadful vice—gaming. Miss Bellamy had also by this time contracted a taste for expense; she took a house at Richmond, where Lord Tyrawley, her father, at the time resided, and a reconciliation was soon effected between them. But it was at this juncture that the uncertain Fortune which attends on such pursuits as Mr. Metham's proved her wonted fickleness; his affairs became embarrassed, and those of his mistress's were in no better plight. It is an old saying, that, as Poverty comes in at the door, Love flies out at the window, and it was so in this instance. Miss Bellamy, though still under age, young, and beautiful, was already waning in her love for Metham; and possibly the chagrin arising from both their circumstances had some effect in turning her thoughts to other speculations; at least some fancy had got into her head that she might be able to captivate the French King, and all manner of other gay and foolish fancies began to take possession of her brain. With these she was induced to visit Tunbridge Wells, where she soon lost all that remained of her money, and was rejected by some of her father's relations who were at the time there, but in a way that did them, it must be allowed, great honour.

The two circumstances, want of money and the rejection by her relations, obliged her to return suddenly to London, where she formed, in rather a romantic manner, an acquaintance with Mr. Fox, the first Lord Holland, and his friend Mr. Calcraft. Not having money to pay for the horses which had brought her from Tunbridge Wells, she had sent to a friend of Mr. Metham's for a supply, and while the servant was gone, Mr. Fox and Mr. Calcraft happened to pass, and were induced to visit her. In this affair a note for fifty pounds was left for her on the mantel-shelf, and after an agreeable conversation they went away: with this note she went, with other visitors who came in afterwards, to cards, and won as much more.

It was now evident that her youthful habits were broken, and her principles becoming too flexible. It could not be said that she was absolutely profligate, but she had, from the period of her elopement, widely receded from feminine propriety, though still agreeable to her light and gay friends.

She joined Garrick and the performers at Drury Lane theatre; at the same time she also set up a Pharo bank, and commenced a career that promised no honour and only hopes of emolument—if that epithet can be applied to an establishment which at the outset was eminently prosperous, insomuch that her profits soon enabled her to redeem her jewels, which were pledged for the capital of the bank; also to pay her debts, and to leave her a considerable residue.

When the theatrical season came round, Miss Bellamy appeared as Juliet with Garrick. During the run of the play she formed an acquaintance with an old gentleman and a lady, (Mr. Gunsel, of Donnan Park, near Colches-

ter,) which, in its opening, began with great felicity; at the same time Mr. Metham, who had long been detained by his pecuniary perplexities in the country, came to town, but not in circumstances of sufficient affluence to justify him in again setting up an establishment.

It was on this occasion that, incited by her mother, she requested him to perform his promise of marrying her; but he rose and abruptly left the room. Soon after she received a note from him, engaging himself and his brother-in-law, Mr. Dives, to dine with her, and requesting that there should be no other company. When they arrived, there was a third gentleman with them, who proved to be an attorney. Mr. Metham mentioned a deed of settlement which he intended to make, by which, if he died without issue, the estates he expected by his father should go to Mr. Dives, who had married his sister, and that three hundred pounds a-year on them should be secured to her, and two thousand pounds to their son. Thus ended that liaison, much in the usual way of such connexions.

About this time, an agreeable anecdote is related of a quarrel which arose between her and the famous Night-thought Young. Miss Bellamy objected to an absurd line in *The Brothers*, from Princess Irexine—

“ I will speak in thunder to you.”

The Doctor said he thought it the most forcible line in the piece; to which she risibly replied, that she thought it would be much more so if he added lightning. This nettled him, and he declared the play was the best he ever wrote. She reminded him of his *Revenge*, which set the other performers a smiling, and threw him into a passion. However, by a happy application of flattery,

she appeased the Doctor, who, to the astonishment of all present, like another Jephtha, sacrificed the line, and ended all contest by inviting himself home to dine with her—a circumstance now more remarkable than in those days, for few servants of the Church, especially one possessing such a pious reputation as the author of *Night-thoughts*, would have made such an appointment with a gay actress under protection.

The 30th of January, the Martyrdom of King Charles, there being no performance at the theatre, and the day being also the anniversary of Mr. Metham's birth, his mistress gave a dinner to some of his friends, and among others he brought Mr. Calcraft with him. At this dinner, the dessert being too sumptuous, Mr. Metham quarrelled with her. The festivity of the company was in consequence destroyed, and our heroine solemnly vowed, that were he then to offer his hand she would reject it.

Mr. Metham came next day and endeavoured to atone for his rudeness, but she remained inexorable; after some days, finding she still objected to receive him as a lover, he solicited to be admitted as a friend, and to this she reluctantly consented. In this crisis she received, under a blank cover, a present of a thousand pounds, which, however, she laid aside, persuaded that the donor would declare himself. This afterwards proved to have been sent from Mr. Calcraft, who soon after pledged himself to the extent of fifty thousand pounds, to marry her after six or seven years, when he expected to be free to do so. In this offer there was, however, great duplicity, for he had another wife then living, unknown to his friends and the world; but though she was induced at first to refuse a representation relative to Metham's

conduct, she was persuaded to change her mind, and in all but the name became the wife of Calcraft. It belongs not, however, to the character of this work to dwell on the hasty and headlong resolutions of Miss Bellamy. It is enough to mention, that without much affection, she lived with him, and being possessed both of great cleverness and much sagacity, it was generally considered that she was the Mary Anne Clarke of the day, but she materially assisted in the augmentation of Calcraft's fortune.

It was commonly supposed that she was married to Calcraft; yet, though regarded as the wife of a man in universal esteem, in the enjoyment of affluence, fame, and every luxury, she was now unhappy. Her heart lay cold in the midst of all the blandishments around her, and, with a gay and smiling countenance, her bosom was full of sorrow. She had strayed from the path of rectitude, she was conscious she had done so, and sought for peace of mind in the midst of a brilliant dissipation without finding it. Her health, from these secret causes, began to give way, and she was advised to visit the Bristol Wells for a time. Scarcely, however, had she reached the place, when she was informed that Mr. Calcraft was seized with the gout in his head, and that her daughter was taken with the small-pox, and had infected her mother; in consequence she was compelled, alike by anxiety and affection, to hasten to the invalids. Her alarm, however, proved fortunately greater than the event; all recovered, and the tenour of her life flowed in its wonted channel, until the state of her health again obliged her to go abroad.

On her return to London, she found Mr. Calcraft had enlarged their establishment, and taken a splendid house in Parliament-street; but he refused to pay the extra

expenses which had been incurred by housekeeping in their preceding residence. This, as represented in the Apology, was mean on his part; but we must always recollect that the lady was profuse. On the morning in which she came to an explanation with Mr. Calcraft respecting their household bills, just as he had left the apartment from the altercation, a female was shown in—tall, thin, pale, and dejected, but with the remains of a mien which seemed to declare she had not been born to indigence. After some preliminary conversation, she threw open a decent cloak that covered her variety of wretchedness, and exhibited such a spectacle of ruin and beggary, that was itself a painful affliction to witness. She then told her story—that she was the widow of a young baronet, the first lieutenant of a man of war, which had been blown up in battle. That her marriage had been one more of love than prudence, which had induced her father-in-law to leave only his title and a very small estate to his son; and that she had five children—four in misery. Her eldest son had some expectations from his uncle; but the others were most wretched, and her eldest daughter had, through the carelessness of the servant, fallen through a window, by which she had broken one of her legs, that was obliged to be amputated. The shock at the catastrophe that had befallen her husband threw her into premature labour, and the child she had borne, and who was then four years old, there was cause to fear would prove an idiot. These accumulated distresses had impaired her own health, and occasioned the temporary loss of the use of her limbs, and in this state of grief, misfortune, and want, she had been induced to apply for assistance.

Miss Bellamy presented her with more money than she

could spare, which she had just received from Mr. Calcraft; and at the same juncture Mr. Fox, the father of the celebrated orator, entered the room. The poor lady's tale was briefly told, and he was exceedingly moved. He presented her with a note for fifty pounds, and soon after her four children, through his influence, were placed on the compassionate list with a pension of ten pounds a-year, and she herself was allowed fifty pounds annually from the Treasury, in consideration of her husband having lost his life in the service of his country. This anecdote itself deserves the more consideration, as an instance where the private bounty of the man preceded the public justice of the minister, and reflects honour on the feelings of Miss Bellamy.

At all times the agent of impulses, Miss Bellamy about this period rendered herself also distinguished by her patronage, after the condemnation of the Rev. Dr. Wilkin-son, the first victim of the then New Marriage Act.

The players are not all judiciously educated, nor do they always take the trouble to remedy early neglect or carelessness, though no class of public men requires more accuracy of information in respect to national and historical costume. While Miss Bellamy continued to live with Mr. Calcraft, she still pursued her career on the stage. *The Prophetess* being appointed for representation, Mr. Ross consulted her how a Roman emperor should be dressed, and among other things she advised him to have a wig as near as possible made to resemble a natural head of hair. Mr. Rich thought it should be what was called a full-bottomed one; and Miss Bellamy, smiling at this idea, put on a grave dramatic face, and said, "Then let it be as large a one as you can, and to render yourself the more

conspicuous, you must wear a hoop under your lamb-skins."

Both player and manager believing her serious, the advice was taken, and never was a reception by any audience more joyous than that of poor Mr. Ross, on the night of representation, in his grotesque apparel, of imperial Cæsar. The joke, however, had a good effect, as it broke the absurd custom of dressing the heroes of Greece and Rome in full-bottomed perukes.

In the Apology for her Life are several shrewd remarks, which partake of the vivacity of her character: I am, therefore, notwithstanding the cloud that hangs upon the thorough authenticity of the work, much inclined to believe the narrative genuine, and that it was dictated by herself. Mr. Calcraft appears to have been an able man of business, and much of the vituperation with which she accuses him of sordid and ungallant qualities, should be perhaps ascribed to feminine petulance. His greatest errors consisted in linking himself with so gay and so thoughtless a mistress; vanity, undoubtedly, was one of the main motives that induced him.

On one of her benefits, having a dramatic reason to postpone the evening, she effected an exchange with Mrs. Hamilton, a vulgar woman, who rejoiced in the honour of having her benefit for the first of the season. The night happened to be wet; the boxes were thin, and the two-shilling gallery overflowing, the company were admitted to them. Miss Bellamy pretended, or felt an offensive effluvia from them, and Ross told Mrs. Hamilton in playful malice, that the reason why she held her handkerchief to her face during the performance was, because they *stunk*. On the subsequent evening, when

Mrs. Hamilton should have performed for our heroine, she feigned illness. This disappointed the audience, and when she next appeared they hissed her. At length, upon the tumult a little ceasing, she stepped forward, and said, "Gemmen and ladies! I suppose as how you hiss me, because I did not play at Miss Bellamy's benefit. I would have performed, but she said my audience stunk, and were all tripe people." The house was in a roar of laughter, and the pit, with that ready taste by which they are ever distinguished, cried out, "Well said, Tripe!" and joined in the universal encore.

But I should observe, that about this period the spirit of Miss Bellamy was evidently chagrined. There is a malicious satisfaction plainly in some of her anecdotes of others, which cannot be applauded; for undoubtedly she is depicted as a "good hater," and certainly some of her stories deeply partake of this unpleasant colouring. Considering, therefore, the question which hangs over the work ascribed to Bicknell, I am sufficiently justified in omitting some of her tales, which, at the utmost, are only calculated to give pain to the descendants of those on whom she is made to inflict her asperity. At the same time, there are others so much out of the common current of events, that they cannot with so much premeditated inattention be passed over: for example, at the rehearsal of Dodsley's *Cleon*, the incidents were both characteristic in themselves and amusing. This tragedy Garrick had declined, but in the other house, by the simple and natural performance of our heroine, the play proved effectual, notwithstanding the low and slow manner in which at the rehearsal she acted the madness—a style which had been condemned by the author, and by the lords and gentlemen who were then present.

Among others at the rehearsal she perceived Mr. Metham, whom she had not met since they had separated, and who affected an indifference and a dignity contrary to truth. The effect of his manner disconcerted her, and but recovering from an indisposition from which she had suffered considerably, she played with feebleness and languor. Dr. Johnson, who was also present, under an impression that she had misconceived her part, interfered, and when she came to repeat, "Thou shalt not murder," caught her roughly by the arm, saying at the same time, "It is a commandment, and must be spoken, 'Thou shalt not murder!'" The Doctor was not then personally known to her, and his rude handling was not calculated to win her regard. This, with her indisposition, and Metham's appearance, made her so seemingly unfit for the part, that the author told her that he as well as his friends did not think she was forcible enough; when, to his consternation, she replied, "I have a reputation to lose as an actress; but, as for your piece, Mr. Garrick has anticipated the damnation of it, publicly, the last night, at the Bedford Coffee-house, where he declared that it could not pass muster, as it was the very worst ever exhibited." This had the effect of driving him away with humiliated hopes. The style, however, which she intended to adopt was that of great simplicity, both in manners and dress; and, in consequence, she resolved to part with her hoop: an innovation of great moment, for at that period professed nuns appeared in that decoration as well as with powder in their hair. Her conception of the part elicited the most brilliant applause, and she had the satisfaction, in the death-scene, to hear the gong-like voice of Dr. Johnson sounding in the pit, as if he had been himself a

young fellow, "I will write a copy of verses upon her myself."

It was not in her profession only that Miss Bellamy was distinguished. Complaints having come from the army, then in Germany, that the soldiers' shirts were so ill stitched that they became unsewed in the first washing, and that their shoes and stockings were badly manufactured; as Mr. Calcraft was in fault for this, she made inquiry, and found that an additional penny for making the shirt, and three halfpence per pair in the shoes and stockings, would remedy the evil: this addition she directed to be given at her own expense, for all the contract that Mr. Calcraft had taken, and was brought by it into debt to the amount of nine hundred pounds. Save, however, a hundred pounds from Mr. Fox, and another from the Marquis of Granby, at her benefit, she received no other reward for her public service—except the honour of the sentinels in the Park resting their arms as she passed: an incident that reflects something like the beauty of gratitude on the army, to whom two actresses have done essential and disinterested service—our heroine, in this temporary instance, and Nell Gwyn in suggesting Chelsea Hospital.

After the birth of their son, Henry Fox Calcraft, to whom Mr. Fox stood sponsor, Miss Bellamy was suddenly overtaken with a severe illness, for which she was sent to Bristol, burning with indignation against Mr. Calcraft for his negligence in paying their mutual debts, but, after getting rid of her disease, she was, notwithstanding his sordid treatment, induced to return to his house in Parliament-street. Her adventures there were again of the same tissue as the rest of her life—full of incidents tinged with sorrow; but after several such scenes

as were to be expected from the state of their tempers, she went to Bristol again, intending to return no more.

She next accepted of an engagement which induced her to revisit Ireland, where, having performed with her usual applause, and acted with equal thoughtlessness of conduct, she returned to London, but did not rejoin Mr. Calcraft, having another connexion.

The downward career of her adventures had now commenced. There may have been some reason for the complaints which she has so bitterly made of Mr. Calcraft, but her own conduct was eminently extravagant; and more owing, in fact, to that prodigality are her faults to be ascribed, than either to viciousness of heart or dissoluteness of principle. Being deeply in debt, she was induced, the better to make an arrangement with her creditors, to go clandestinely abroad, but she was stopped at a village in the neighbourhood of Warwick by her paramour Mr. Diggs, and conveyed by him to Cambridge. Various circumstances connected with her flight, arising from pecuniary necessity, obliged her to visit Edinburgh, but in a lower and more humiliated condition than she had ever been in all her life before. In the Scottish metropolis, however, when the state of her affairs became public, she was indulgently treated, and the laws there being more lenient to debtors than those of England, her perplexities were less afflicting.

A theatre being at this period created in Glasgow, she was invited to open it. Her circumstances were at the time greatly hampered, and, to add to her distress, when she arrived in the royal city, she was informed that the theatre, with all her wardrobe, which had been sent before her from Edinburgh, had, on the preceding

evening, been destroyed by an intentional fire. Glasgow, which in liberality and good faith is among the most distinguished cities of the empire, has ever been remarkable for possessing within itself a fanatic spirit less worldly than may be met with elsewhere. The building of a theatre had inflamed this spirit to a great degree, insomuch that one of the preachers was moved by it to have dreams and visions ; in one of which, as he recited it to his hearers, he was present at a convivial party in the infernal regions, where Lucifer, stirring the punch-bowl, gave the health of the gentleman who had sold the ground for the playhouse. The hearers, roused by the description so unlike any thing that ever takes place in Glasgow, the city that flourishes by the preaching of the word, hastened to the den of abominations, and set it on fire, but after the stage and wardrobe had been consumed, the general edifice was rescued from destruction.

On this occasion our heroine behaved with great equanimity. After inspecting the ruins, she desired the manager to go to the Cross, and inform every person he saw that, unless she made her appearance next evening, according to her agreement, but which, by the burning of her wardrobe, she could not do, she would not act at all. The heart of the plainstones was moved, and one of the principal merchants came immediately to the inn and offered her whatever money she stood in need of, and told her she should have all the ladies' clothes about the city, if it were possible to get the stage repaired. That moral play *The Citizen*, with *The Mock Doctor* for the farce, as a tragedy could not be got up in time, was accordingly the first performance of the regular drama in Glasgow: and it is but a consistent historical

fact, that the assurance given to Miss Bellamy was almost literally fulfilled : from being mistress of only one gown, she was soon in possession of forty, and some of them almost new, and very rich, for the Glasgow people do not keep the word of promise to the ear, and break it to the hope ; on the contrary, her performance was a great night in the royal city. The provost's wife, or at least one of the principal ladies, declared from the boxes that the audience would not stir till the players and servants of the house were safely away ; and, accordingly, the town guard escorted them home, that they might not be molested on the road.

From Glasgow our heroine returned in due season to Edinburgh, and she speaks of the treatment she received in these two cities as commendable to the Scottish character. She then returned to London, and, in the journey, visited Mr. Metham, as a common friend, now, by the death of his father, " Sir George," where she spent some days agreeably and innocently ; and where he, being related to the Earl of Eglington, entreated his Lordship's influence to procure an engagement for her with the managers, but it proved abortive.

On her arrival in town at her mother's, she separated herself from Mr. Diggs, and formed an engagement with the managers of Covent Garden. With it the signs of her fate recommenced ; she became involved in fresh embarrassments, and her character as gradually sank in the estimation of the virtuous portion of the public. Her respectable friends and patrons could not be said to have deserted her ; it was, however, more for their own enjoyment in her acting, than friendship for her, that they appeared at the theatre, for they abridged their personal intercourse. By her debts she was exposed to fresh indig-

nities, so that her health and, above all, her spirits, one of her chiefest spells, began to decline, and, to add to her inward causes of dejection, she was no longer an object of solicitude, but had incurred a tendency to be rejected by the managers. In this assemblage of unfortunate circumstances she lost her mother, and her natural sorrow on the event was darkened by the perfidy and injustice of a relation who administered to her will as heir-at-law. At this period Mr. Calcraft also died, without otherwise noticing her in his will than as the mother of his children; nor did he mention his wife by name, whom he had married in secrecy, an omission which enabled her, by afterwards proving the marriage, to set the will aside, and to obtain, in consequence, a third part of his fortune.

Miss Bellamy, about this time, formed some connexion with Woodward. What it may have been is not very clearly made out, but their friendship was mutual, and when he died his will evinced the sincerity of his regard; her attempts, however, to recover the legacy were fruitless, and the attorney, who had the management of the business, treated her with insolence. It could not be said that it was the first time that she had met with it, but it was the first time when it ought to have been repressed, not because she was then suffering pecuniary distress, but because she was enduring the disappointment of a well-founded hope.

Her circumstances were becoming desperate; her professional enchantments had ceased, her beauty faded, and the charm of her natural buoyancy of spirits was dissolved; she was now forty-five years of age, friendless, and with a tainted reputation. Poverty compelled her

to discharge her man-servant, though he had lived with her a long time; she likewise gave up her first-floor apartments, and went to a higher and meaner room in the same house; she was far beyond her depth in debt, and she had parted to the pawnbrokers with every article that she could raise a shilling upon. She saw no hope, and resolved to put a period to her existence.

She left the house unperceived, between nine and ten o'clock, wild, gloomy, and silent, wandering about the roads and fields till the clock was striking eleven; she then made towards Westminster-bridge, as there was a probability that she would not at that hour be interrupted by passengers. Having reached the bridge, she descended the stairs and sat down on the lowest step, waiting till the tide would cover her. Her despair was of that sullen kind which could endure,—though resolved on death, she thought not of taking the fatal plunge,—and she prayed as she sat almost confident that “the Everlasting had not fixed his canon against self-slaughter.” The moon shone dimly through the clouds, and gave just light enough to distinguish a passenger on the bridge, but she herself was in mourning, and not likely to be discerned. She took off her bonnet and apron and laid them on the stairs, and leaning her head upon her hands was lost in sorrow, ruminating on the pleasures and disappointments of her chequered life. In this sad posture, chiding the tardy waters, she was roused from her reverie by the voice of a woman at some little distance, in a soft, plaintive tone addressing a child in these sorrowful words,—“How, my dear, can you cry to me for bread, when you know I have not even a morsel to carry to your dying father?—My God, my God, what wretched-

ness can compare to mine!—but thy Almighty will be done!” The words smote the heart of our unhappy heroine; she burst into tears and echoed, “Thy Almighty will be done!” and putting her hand into her pocket for a handkerchief to wipe her eyes, she felt that she had a few half-pence remaining: prompted by the impulse of the moment she ran up the steps and gave them to the woman. It is such things as this that make the events of nature often beggar the wonders of fiction, and justify the pious lines of Phillips the poet:—

“ Though plung’d in ills, and exercised in care,
Yet never let the noble mind despair:
When press’d with dangers, and beset with foes,
The gods their timely succour interpose:
And when our virtue sinks, o’erwhelm’d with grief,
By unforeseen expedients bring relief.”

This occurrence changed the tenour of her thoughts, and she returned home, encouraged yet to live; but the hope by which she was actuated was feeble, her maid crying for her absence, and yet happy at the same time to tell her that she had obtained two shillings to appease their immediate necessity. Next day a lady called upon her, and administered what kindness she could, and, during the course of a few days after, she heard repeated knockings at the door, of different persons having called to assist her. This was owing to a paragraph which somebody had inserted in the papers, to the purport that the female Timon was in want of the necessities of life, and those who had formerly partaken of her prosperity ought to blush at suffering her to be in such a condition. This was one of the methods to which

the lady had recourse in order to make her case known ; but such is the common insensibility of the world, that but one obeyed the call.

The theatre, however, soon enabled her to reduce the most pressing of her claims, and her misfortunes were mitigated. But the man to whom she threw her virgin beauty away, Sir George Metham, refused to assist her, and, save the Duke of Montague and Earl Spencer, she was abandoned by all her summer friends. Still the players, by concurring in a free benefit for her, on the 24th of May 1785, put it in the power of the town to redeem humanity from the disgrace of leaving an old favourite to starve. Her doom, however, was sealed—she not only had encountered the difficulties brought on by her own folly, but was involved in those of others, and had fallen among unprincipled and vicious characters ; and, in the midst of the troubles arising from all these causes, she received accounts of the death of her eldest son, and, on the back of the event, a refusal from his father, Sir George, to furnish her with money to buy mourning.

She was now verging to the confines of the last stage of human misery, that of being despised. She advertised, under a fictitious name, for the place of a servant, under the denomination of housekeeper to an elderly gentleman, but no one ever inquired after the advertiser. She had not, however, absolutely again fallen to despair, nor into common crime ; but she was low indeed. In this base and degraded state she was informed by Arthur Murphy, that her annuity on the estate of Mr. Calcraft was established against his executors. It was, however, but a vision, the empty establishment of an abstract proposition—nothing came to her.

In 1786 she was again imprisoned for debt, and on this occasion she addressed the public, stating her situation, and that it was owing to her eagerness to pay her just debts, in return for which she had met with only reproaches and insults. In 1788, she died. It is impossible to reflect on the close of her life without sorrow: few sketches of biography more emphatically tell their moral.

ARTHUR MURPHY.

ARTHUR MURPHY is an example of the utmost eminence to which respectable mediocrity may attain. No man can hope, without the gifts of originality and genius, to reach higher distinction; and with the utmost ambition that can be united with these endowments, none has better deserved the modicum of esteem which frugal posterity awards to talent. Had his ability been equal to his endeavours, he would have been great. On the stage, Garrick had withered before him—as a dramatist, Shakspeare and Sheridan had veiled their diminished heads—as a lawyer, Coke and Littleton had been but as precedents to a statute, and as a translator, the classics had derived lustre from his touch—for in all these departments of intellectual exertion he was equally distinguished, and reached the periphery of his sphere, a brilliant but a regular orb. In a word, and without badinage, in the truest sense he illustrated in himself the distinction between genius and talent; for, destitute of every sparkle and atom of the former, he is justly entitled to be honoured in the very first class of those who are acknowledged by all their friends to possess a full measure of the latter. In every thing within the scope of his universal aims he has merited praise—never once admiration—a gem, but a topaz, not a diamond; neither amber nor paste, yet unquestionably a precious stone.

This eminent person was born, according to a memorandum in his mother's prayer-book, on the 27th of December 1727, at Clooniquin, in the county of Roscommon, Ireland. His father was a merchant in Dublin, and sailed in a vessel belonging to himself for Philadelphia—an unfortunate voyage, for the ship with all on board was never after heard of. From that period his mother resided in a house on George's Quay, which had been built by her husband, till December 1735, when, by the advice of her brother, she sold her property in Dublin, and removed to Argyle Buildings, London.

But the young adventurer, the subject of these memoirs, did not continue long in the British metropolis. A sister of his mother being at that time settled with her family at Boulogne, requested that he should be sent to her. Accordingly, in the year 1736, he embarked, and found her with a numerous family in a large house, near the church in the lower town. With this lady he resided as one of her own sons till 1738, when on account of her health, she was advised by her physicians to visit the South of France.

Arthur Murphy, turned of ten years old, was then sent to the college at St. Omer's, and in that seminary he remained six years. This was the customary period that students attended; for the college was divided into six schools, or classes, and a year was appropriated to each, still under the same master, who began with the lowest, and at the end of the year went on with his pupils to the second class, taking with him such as he deemed qualified to go forward. In this way he accompanied them to the sixth class, when the course of their education was considered as finished.

In the life written by Murphy himself, there are some

little slips and inadvertencies of dates. He states, for example, that in February 1734 he was placed in the lowest school; but it was in 1736 that he was sent to Boulogne, and as he mentions that in 1744 he left the college, being then in his seventeenth year, the correction of this error, which would be important only in his horoscope, is easily adjusted.

At school he was, by his own report, a distinguished boy. In the fifth year, he stood a public examination of the *Æneid* by heart, in which he acquitted himself with applause; but when he returned to London his classic erudition was destined to suffer humiliation, for he could not answer a very simple arithmetical question; but this deficiency was rectified in an academy near Charing Cross.

In August 1747 he was sent to the counting-house of an eminent merchant in Cork, where he remained a clerk till April 1749. During his residence at Cork his uncle, who had an estate in Jamaica, destined him for that island; but it was not agreeable to himself, and in consequence he returned to his mother, and was taken into a banking-house, as a clerk, in Lombard-street, where he continued till the end of 1751.

At this period the playhouses had rich attractions. The actors were the most distinguished in the annals of the stage, and London had many advantages which in this our age have disappeared, particularly in the nightly meetings of the town wits at the Bedford coffee-house in the Piazza of Covent Garden, and George's, at Temple Bar. To these haunts of genius, Murphy made his way, and smit with the love of fame, resolved to commence author. Accordingly, on Saturday, October 21, 1752, he valiantly published the first number of *THE GRAY'S INN*

JOURNAL, which he conducted, with some distinction, till 1754.

Though it must be regarded as a juvenile work, it yet contains several clever papers. Number XXXIX. a burlesque prediction on the consequences of naturalizing the Jews, a project at that time as much in vogue as it has been recently in our own, has a great deal of playful merit. And a judicious criticism in the LXXIIIth Number was honoured with a growl of approbation from Dr. Johnson.

At this period Garrick being the god of his idolatry, he took some offence at a preference which Morgan,—the author of *Philocha*, a tragedy—had for Barry, and in consequence was involved in a duel. He was about the same epoch beset with other misfortunes; his uncle died, and left him nothing, and a play he had given to Garrick was not brought out as he expected, an indignity which he resented, by returning to the monarch manager the free-admission ticket, which he had enjoyed to Drury Lane. Nevertheless, his predilection for the drama continued, and on the advice of Foote he determined to go upon the stage. Accordingly, on the 21st September 1754, he concluded “The Gray’s Inn Journal,” and soon after appeared on the boards of Covent Garden, as Othello. He owed at this time about 300*l.*; which, in the course of the season, he contrived, by good management, to reduce.

He was next year engaged at Drury Lane by Garrick, and with the profits of his farce *The Apprentice*, which was first performed that season, with his salary and benefit, he cleared about 800*l.*; and in the summer of 1756, having nearly 400*l.* in his pocket, resolved on leaving the stage, and to devote himself to the study of the law.

He gives no explanation of the motives by which he was

actuated in this determination ; for though undoubtedly his appearance on the stage was not so brilliant as that of Garrick, it was highly respectable, and, in all things, according to the most approved Green-room orthodoxy. He possessed figure, voice, talent, and judgment, but none of that rare element of which excellence is made. It must not, however, be concealed, that he estimated himself among the players at perhaps a little more than his value, or than they were willing to allow; and probably conceived he was not exactly in his proper sphere; for being higher in his origin than they are in general, and being likewise of a disposition not to abate any deference to which he might imagine himself entitled, it is easy to conceive that his superciliousness may have been the cause for changing his profession.

At the beginning of 1757 he offered to enter himself a Student of the Middle Temple; but the benchers objected to receive him, because he had been an actor. He then applied to the Society of Gray's Inn, where he met with a similar refusal. The conduct of these two learned bodies was, in this instance, mean; for in all professions which have for their object the acquisition of a livelihood, it ought rather to be the system of the higher to encourage candidates for election to come from the lower. But it is not among men whose importance has been so much fenced as that of the lawyers, that we should look for liberality; and yet can aught be more absurd than that, in a vocation where every thing depends on the man himself, fitness should not be considered as the true qualification? Murphy felt the repulse as if it had been a personal insult, and was fired with indignation; but to be so affected by what was probably a general rule, only shows how much

more highly he considered himself than he ought to have done. He was, however, obliged to endure the exclusion; but instead of going again on the stage, he employed himself on a weekly paper, *THE TEST*,* devoted to the politics of Henry Fox. His patron, afterwards Lord Holland, spoke to Lord Mansfield of his rejection by the benchers of the Temple and of Gray's Inn, and his Lordship advised Murphy to offer himself at Lincoln's Inn, which he did, and was admitted. But the drama was still attractive, and in the following year his farce of *The Upholsterer* was produced with great success. His next piece was *The Orphan of China*. In 1760 he also composed *The Desert Island*, and *The Way to keep Him*, which was at first in three acts, but afterwards enlarged in 1761 into a five act comedy; in the same year he likewise brought out *All in the Wrong*; *The Citizen*, and *The Old Maid*. All these pieces have undoubtedly the merit of being amusingly interesting in the representation, when aided by suitable talents in the actors; in the closet, however, this is less obvious, for they have little of that brilliancy of dialogue which constitutes so much of what is deservedly considered as the wit of comedy.

In 1762 he was called to the bar, and his law studies were enlivened by having engaged in *THE AUDITOR*, in defence of Lord Bute against Wilkes's virulence in the North Briton.

In the summer of 1763, he went the Norfolk circuit, from which he returned with an empty purse. It was with

* In conducting *THE TEST*, he used to send his manuscripts for inspection to a small house at the back of the public house at the Western corner of the Park of Holland House, and from thence they were returned with instructions how to proceed.

reference to this occasion that his satirical friend Foote used to say, "that Murphy went the circuit in a stage-coach, and came home in the basket." In Trinity term 1764, he made his first effort at the bar, and was complimented by Lord Mansfield; flattered by the distinction, he applied himself to the law with closer assiduity, but still his heart lay more to mimic scenes than real life. He wrote the farce of *Three Weeks after Marriage*; and, in 1768, his tragedy of *Zenobia* was performed with distinguished success. In 1772 he produced *The Grecian Daughter*, which still maintains an occasional place in the series of those pieces which young actresses think necessary to go through before they consider their reputations established. The play itself is only a regular piece of heavy literature,—a leaden statue resembling some Athenian marble, a Parisian lay figure. In the following year his *Alzuma* was performed at Covent Garden; and, in 1777, *Know your own Mind*. But it would be departing widely from the general design of this work either to enumerate or criticise each of his twenty-three dramatic productions.

At this time the study of the law continued to engross his attention; he was, however, less distinguished in Westminster-hall than in the theatre, a circumstance that distinctly points out the mediocrity of his talents; and yet it would seem that the praise of industry in cultivating them cannot be withheld. At the same time, although he relinquished the bar in 1787, in a pet, it does not appear, even by his own account, that he was qualified to attain any very eminent station in that renowned profession. He was doomed to mediocrity from his birth; and, in consequence, although no misfortune of a very sullen hue seems at any period to have darkened his career, he

never could rise higher in the scale of distinction than the limit prescribed by moderation.

On leaving the bar, he bought a house on Hammer-smith-terrace, facing the Thames, the westernmost on the row, where he prepared his translation of Tacitus for the press. The distance from town was, however, inconvenient, and he removed to Knightsbridge.

At this time he had been many years a Commissioner of Bankrupts, which he owed to Lord Loughborough, and attended regularly at Guildhall, till increasing infirmities admonished him to resign. He then wrote a letter to Lord Eldon, the Chancellor, requesting that his resignation might be received; but his Lordship, instead of accepting it, wrote him a most friendly letter, submitting to his consideration whether his brother commissioners would not give that assistance to a gentleman so justly entitled to their respect, which his health might require; and concluded by kindly saying, that, till he heard further from him, he would not notice the intention he had expressed. But the answer of Murphy contained his resignation.

In March 1803 his Majesty was pleased to assent to a proposal from Mr. Addington, (Lord Sidmouth), to grant a pension to Murphy. As it is not often that instances of such consideration are bestowed on literary endeavours, it will give pleasure to see the record of this one, which appears particularly honourable to his Lordship.

“Treasury-chambers, Whitehall, March 1, 1803.

“SIR,

“I AM directed by Mr. Addington to acquaint you, that his Majesty has been pleased to grant you a pension of two hundred pounds per annum, to take place from the 5th of January last.

“ Mr. Addington was induced to move his Majesty to confer this mark of favour upon you by no solicitation from any quarter, but from a desire to reward an author who for many years has contributed to the entertainment and instruction of the public.

“ Permit me to add, that having had the honour of meeting you formerly at Lincoln’s-inn, and wishing well on all occasions to the cause of literature, I have a particular pleasure in making this communication to you.

“ I have the honour to be, Sir,

“ Your most obedient humble servant,

“ JOHN SARGENT.”

“ To Arthur Murphy, Esq.”

In no period of his life could it be said that Murphy ever attained affluence, but the comforts he enjoyed were not derived from the profits of literature only, for besides his pension he had an annuity from a relation of two hundred pounds a year, and therefore did not come within the scope of those to whom the pathetic remark of Dryden particularly applies. “ It will continue,” says that illustrious genius, “ to mark the ingratitude of mankind, that they who teach wisdom by the surest means shall generally live poor and unregarded; as if they were born only for the public and had no interest in their well-being, but were to be lighted up like tapers, and to waste themselves for the benefit of others.”

On the 18th of June 1805, in the seventy-eighth year of his age, he expired, and was interred in Hammersmith church, in the same vault with his mother.

THOMAS KING.

I NEVER had the good fortune to see this distinguished performer; he had retired from the stage before I came to London, but in the late General Arabin I have witnessed with great pleasure what some of his admirers assured me was a lively imitation of his manner. I should, however, think, from the nature of those points in which the General's representation were said to be the most striking, that his walk must have been very limited and his style not remarkable for variety.

In making this observation I ought, in justice to the abilities of a man who for the greatest part of fifty-four years was regarded by the public as an ornament of the stage, to say that the dim reflex of imitation can never convey an adequate idea of the professional talents of an actor or musician; the opinions of contemporaries furnish our only means of estimating their merits: posterity, in this respect, acts as a jury, and must decide by the evidence of witnesses.

He was born in the parish of St. George, Hanover-square, in August 1730, educated at Westminster school, and, being intended for the law, articulated to an attorney. But his early predilection for the exhibitions of the stage soon interfered with his intended profession. He first became an amateur performer, and in his seventeenth year, having determined to obey the influences of his

stars, ran away from the desk and joined a troop of strollers then performing at Tunbridge.

In so far his early history appears not to have been very different from that of the common progeny of Thespis. The buoyancy of his spirits in old age bore testimony to the hilarity of his youthful temperament, and his elopement from the desk was a becoming prologue to his subsequent adventures. He was evidently a sprightly apprentice, inheriting from Nature a competent share of recklessness, and bearing himself so bravely to Fortune that she was never able to crush his courage.

Some pains have been taken in the *Biographia Dramatica*, to describe him as a gentleman descended by his father's side from a respectable family in Hampshire, and that his mother was of the Blisses of Gloucestershire:—but who were these Blisses? The fact of his being, after his aspiring enterprize to Tunbridge, allowed to sow his wild oats as an unvalued vagabond, shows that his family could not afford to seek him, and that this vamped-up pedigree must be regarded about as real as the glass diamonds and other trumpery of the green-room.

From Tunbridge he became a legitimate stroller, and studied tragedy, comedy, pastoral, and farce, in booths and barns, gathering renown from the profitless plaudits of bumpkins. In this career he encountered all the variegated calamities that players are heir to, accidents and expedients diversified with mirth and melancholy, which in after years often amusingly enlivened the topics of his conversation. He once walked from Beaconsfield to London and back in the same day, to raise a small sum to purchase properties, as they are technically called, for his appearance at night in the character of Richard

III. The profits of the play to him were three-pence half-penny, and a share of the candle-ends which survived the performance: the latter he laid a votive offering at the shrine of a green-room goddess.

In the summer of 1748 he performed in a booth at Windsor, and from this time the Fates that had malignantly frowned upon his fortunes,

“Relax’d their brows and dress’d their eyes with smiles.”

Garrick, who as a manager had a quick ear to theatrical merit wherever it could be heard of in the kingdom, was induced by the report of his abilities to visit Windsor, and having seen him perform, engaged him for two seasons to play at Drury Lane, where, on the 19th of October 1748, he made his first appearance as Allworth, in *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*.

But although Garrick has undoubtedly the honour of having justly appreciated the talents of young King, Mrs. Pritchard is entitled to the praise of nicer discernment for discovering his peculiar forte. In the summer following she belonged to a company then performing at the theatre of Jacob’s Well near Bristol, with which King was also engaged; persuaded that the cast of his abilities was comic, she made a point that he should play Benedict to her Beatrice, Ranger to her Clarinda, &c. But, nevertheless, it was thought by many that the buskin fitted him best, for he enacted Romeo, George Barnwell, &c. and Whitehead, the Poet Laureat, afterwards, in his drama of *The Roman Father*, assigned to him the part of Valerius.

King himself was however conscious of his own endowments, and finding himself seldom allowed to wear the sock, and having now acquired some of the

actor's capital, reputation, he quitted the English stage and went to Dublin, where he continued several seasons with rising fame and increasing profit. But he was induced by the exhortations of Mrs. Woffington to return to London. Not however succeeding, in forming a suitable engagement with the managers there, he accepted an offer from the proprietors of the Bath theatre, to be principal performer and manager, in both of which capacities he satisfied alike the public and his employers.

Mr. Sheridan, the father of the orator, having resumed the management of the Dublin playhouse, which he had resigned before King left it, persuaded him to go back, where he remained nearly two years,—indeed, until Sheridan thought fit to retire.

In 1759, looking with ambition and regret to Drury Lane, he returned to London, and, at the commencement of the season, having entered into another engagement with Garrick, made his appearance as Tom in *The Conscious Lovers* with distinguished reputation. In the course of this year he added considerably to his celebrity by the style in which he performed Squire Groom in *Love-à-la-Mode*, then acted for the first time.

But, although now considered an eminent performer, he was not yet reckoned in the highest class of the profession, nor, indeed, for some years after. It was in 1766-7, as Lord Ogleby in *The Clandestine Marriage*, that he achieved his fame; by his excellent conception of that part, and the felicitous manner in which every point and turn were executed, it is allowed by all those who recollect his performance to have been one of the happiest histrionic efforts that the stage has produced.

This comedy was the joint composition of Garrick and Colman, although the *Biographia Dramatica* states, on

the authority of a gentleman who reported, as he said, from Colman himself, that “ Garrick composed two acts, which he sent to me, desiring me to put them together, or do what I would with them ; I did put them together, for I put them into the fire, and wrote the play myself.”

But, in this statement, the authors of the *Biographia Dramatica* have been misled ; and, therefore, as it is always interesting to correct any curious point in literary history, and as I have it my power to set the facts of this case clear, I may be permitted to deviate from the general plan of my undertaking, in this instance, to do so. I have before me a letter from Colman to Garrick, in which he says :—

4th December 1765.

“ Since my return from Bath I have been told, but I can hardly believe it, that in speaking of the ‘ *Clandestine Marriage*,’ you have gone as far as to say, ‘ Colman lays a great stress on his having written this character (Lord Ogilby) on purpose for me : suppose it should come out that *I wrote it* ?’ That the truth should come out is my earnest desire ; but I should be extremely sorry, for your sake, that it should come out by such a declaration from you. Of all men in the world, I believe I may venture to say that I should be one of the last to take any thing to myself of which I was not the author ; and I should hope you could never so much forget yourself, and what is due to an old faithful friend, as to endeavour to fasten such an imputation on me. In the present case you must be sensible that such an insinuation from you must place me in that ridiculous light ; but you know that it was not I but yourself who desired secrecy in relation to our partnership, and you may re-

member the reasons you gave for it. You know, too, that, on the publication of the play, the whole affair was to come out, and that both our names were to appear together in the title-page.

“ Though I cannot believe, till I have the most indisputable proof of it, that you have thus suffered your anger to betray yourself to me, yet it puzzles me to account for an indifferent person’s knowing so much of the matter ; and I must own that I am not only hurt by what I hear you have said, but by what I have known you have written. In your letter to Clutterbuck, which is a kind of memorial against your old friend, you tell him, ‘ that you had formed a plan of a comedy called *The Sisters* ; that I had *brought some city characters into it* ; and, moreover, that if the piece did not succeed, you had promised to take your part, with the shame that might belong to it, to yourself.’ I cannot quote the words of your letter, but I am sure I have not misrepresented the purport of it, though the whole is diametrically opposite to my notion of the state of the partnership subsisting between us. You have the plan of *The Sisters* by you, read it, and see if there are in it any traces of *The Clandestine Marriage*.’ You returned me the rough draught which I drew out of that story, and, thinking it might be of use in conducting the plot, I happened to preserve it ; let them be compared, and see what is the resemblance between them. The first plate of Hogarth’s “ *Marriage-à-la-mode*,” was the ground I went upon ; I had long wished to see these characters on the stage, and mentioned them as proper objects of comedy, before I had the pleasure of your acquaintance, in a letter written expressly in your defence against the attacks of your old arch-enemy, Shirley.

“Again, was there any promise of your taking your part to yourself out of tenderness to my reputation? I do not remember it. I understood it was to be a joint work in the fullest sense of the word, and never imagined that either of us was to lay his finger on any particular scene and cry, ‘This is mine.’ It is true, indeed, that, by your suggestion, Hogarth’s proud lord was converted into Lord Ogleby, and, as the play now stands, the levee scene at the beginning of the second act, and the whole of the fifth act are yours; but in the conduct as well as the dialogue of the fourth act, I think your favourite, Lord Ogleby, has some obligations to me. However, if that be the part of the play which you are desirous to rest your fame upon, I would not have differed with you about the glory of it; but I cannot help being hurt at your betraying so earnest a desire to winnow your wheat from my chaff, at the very time that I was eager to bestow the highest polish on every part of the work, only in the hopes of perpetuating our joint labours by raising a monument of the friendship between me and Mr. Garrick. If I could have awakened the genius of Shakspeare I would have done it; not for the sake of adding to my own reputation, but that it might reflect an honour on us both. I do most solemnly protest that I felt myself more interested as a friend, than as an author, in *The Clandestine Marriage*, and there was nothing in my power which I would not have undertaken in order to add to the brilliancy of its success. Judge, then, of my disappointment to find you so cold and dead to all these feelings! Was it behaving towards me with your usual openness and ingenuousness of temper to reserve from me the communication of your intentions on a point wherein our interest was mutual, till after the commencement of

the season? In all our conversations concerning your return to the stage, for you always allowed a possibility, did you ever tell me that if you did return, you would never play in a new piece, never play in *The Clandestine Marriage*? Did you not often regret the want of a performer for this character; and did not I often express my hopes that you might still perform it? Did you throw cold water on these hopes by any other manner than saying you did not believe you should ever play at all? Nay, when your return to the stage was mentioned among your friends, and I joined in dissuading you from it, did you not openly applaud my disinterestedness, saying, that your absence to me would be of more consequence than to any other person? Had I then the least reason to think that, if you *did* return, you would have any objection to do the business you carved out for yourself? So far was I from the slightest suspicion of it, that, some days after opening the theatre, when you first mentioned this matter to me at Richmond, although you then made no positive declaration, I was thunder-struck. Happening to come up to town next morning I heard, to my farther surprise, that you had declared your intention in the most open as well as positive manner behind the scenes: the whole theatre was acquainted with a circumstance which was the most profound secret to me not twenty-four hours before. Ten days or a fortnight afterwards came our conference before your brother in Johnson's parlour; but your behaviour to me in the intermediate time, as well as then, showed that you had imagined I had been sensibly affected by your unexpected conversation at Richmond; for how did you treat me? Like a friend who had written in concert with you? even like an author with whom you were on tole-

nable terms? You formally demanded to know my positive resolutions ; you told me you would now consider the work as *solely mine*, that you must settle your business, that you had offers of other plays, &c. This was strange manager-like language to your friend and fellow scribbler ; so strange that, from that hour, I concluded I had lost your confidence, and did not wonder that you were unwilling to exert your endeavours to establish the credit of a work which was to degrade your name by joining it to mine.

“ A word or two more and I have done. You tell Clutterbuck that, if I will not consent to the play’s being done this season, you will put a negative on its being played at all. Is it possible you could know me so little as to suppose I ever dreamed of it? If what was undertaken on my part, chiefly with a desire of perpetuating and strengthening the connexion between us, was only to serve as the era of its dissolution, the object for which I laboured vanished, and the appearance of our joint work would rather give me pain than pleasure. You also complain of what I have said on this occasion to other people ; I will not recriminate upon you, nor will I attempt to excuse my own peevishness ; I will only say that I had a right to tell my friends that I had withdrawn the piece, as well as to assign your refusing to play, as the reason for it. Indeed, I could not see how I could well do otherwise. As to the words you charge me with, I never uttered them ; and, on the whole, I flatter myself you never had a difference with any friend who behaved with more moderation.

“ For both our sakes, the secret of our partnership, I think, ought to be made known ; on your part the world would see that you have acted with no more rigour

towards me than you have exercised on yourself, and I shall be delivered from the suspicion of the meanness of fathering a work of which I am not the author. Hereafter, therefore, I shall take the liberty of mentioning the true state of the case, unless you let me know within a few days that you have an objection to it.

“I could not bring myself to the formality of addressing you with *Sir* at opening my letter, though you have *Mistered* me in yours to Clutterbuck and Schomberg, and I hope you will excuse my subscribing myself,

“Your old friend,

“GEORGE COLMAN.”

Never was any document more decisive than this letter: not only the partnership, but the respective parts of the authors of *The Clandestine Marriage* are pointed out. But let us see what Garrick says in reply.

“MR. GARRICK TO GEORGE COLMAN, ESQ.

“Southampton-street, Dec. 5, 1765.

“THOUGH I am to obey his Majesty’s commands this evening, and my head is full of the character I am to play, yet I will answer your long letter however hastily or inaccurately.

“You should not accuse me of any thing in our present circumstances without mentioning your author; let me know what indifferent person told you, and I will answer both him and you. I hope I shall always know what is due to myself and an old friend; and by having that best of feelings, I was astonished and unhappy to hear that you had complained of me (peevishly, indeed,) for not acting the character you had written on purpose

for me; and that if you did not add that *there was an end of our friendship* I was misinformed: the former part was told me by several not indifferent persons, viz. Mr. Kent, Mr. Baldwin, Mr. Strahan, &c. Your suspicions of my behaving in a *manager-like manner* before you went to Bath, are very unworthy of you; I never assumed the consequence of a manager to any body, (for I know that fools may be, and that many fools have been, managers,) much less to one whom—I leave your own heart to apply the rest. I was hurt to see you persevere in a point, which in the end would be of so little consequence to you, and of so much to me. If any of our friends, (to whom I dare refer this affair,) will pronounce that you were friendly or kind in insisting upon my return to the stage in the manner I should have done by acting in a new play, I will own that I am unfit for society, and unworthy the name of friend; but, on the other hand, if they should declare that my plan of happiness was not to be broken in upon by any peculiar notions of yours, it will appear that your peevishness, as you are pleased to call it (before you went to Bath), gave the first stab to our friendship.

“ Though I think your account of the comedy somewhat erroneous, yet I shall not enter into that lesser consideration of who did this or who did that, but return to matters of more consequence: I will adjust that business very easily when called upon. I am sorry that you have given a kind of hint at obligations by your mention of Mr. Shirley. I may be mistaken, but when I recollect my being taxed by a lady before company, of not doing so much for you as you have done for me, or words of the same import, and having heard since of her great warmth in our affair, I own myself surprised, and would

wish for both our sakes that no account *courant*, (as there ought to be none in friendship,) may be produced on either side. You say, that you never knew of my resolution not to act in a *new piece* till after the season had commenced: I am greatly deceived if I cannot mention some persons, among which is one of your own friends, who can attest the contrary. Another part of your letter mentions my desire 'to winnow my wheat from your chaff,'—what can you possibly mean by that? And do you think I have so much vanity of the author? I am sure you cannot. I suspected, indeed, from your unfriendly demand upon me, and from words you dropped, of not being able to read the part of Lord Ogleby, and which is now confirmed by your tauntingly giving the glory of the fourth act to me, that you thought my portion of the play could only be supported by my own acting, and that you rather chose to ask what could not be granted, than tell me your doubts of my part of the work. This I mentioned very sincerely to Clutterbuck; but whatever are our opinions upon this head is now of very little consequence, and if I guess right the chief matter to be answered in your letter is, whether the secret shall be told or not. As I have not been allowed to have any determination in the disposal of the unhappy comedy, I beg that you will act from your own discretion and feeling, and do whatever you please in the affair, only permitting me to subscribe myself,

“Your old friend,

“D. GARRICK.

“P. S. In my hurry I have overlooked something that you lay a great stress upon. You speak of my treatment of you at Richmond; are you really in earnest to upbraid me with saying that I should consider the work as *solely*

yours? Did I or could I mean any thing but that you should dispose of it as you pleased? Were we not then the best friends, and till very near the time of your going to Bath, when I saw, with the greatest concern, a change in your looks and behaviour? And could there be any thing of *manager-like* language in telling you I must fix the business of the season, and if you would not suffer our play to be acted I must accept of other offers to supply its place? Can any thing be more reasonable or less unfriendly? and should not I rather accuse you of using me in a strange manner by withdrawing the piece, when I had a share in it, and reckoned upon its appearance? I have ever thought you and loved you as an affectionate friend; but, surely, your leaving London so abruptly, and leaving complaints of me behind you, were not among the many instances of your kindness and moderation to me; and if I betrayed any warmth in consequence of your conduct, such warmth was at least more natural and excusable than your own."

To complete this little episode of literary jealousy, I will add the reply of Colman.

"Dec. 6, 1765.

"I AM sorry you gave yourself the trouble of answering my letter at a time when you might have been so much better employed; however, if I may judge of your performance last night, it did you no more hurt than I think your playing Lord Ogleby would do you. As a correspondence of this nature, so different from what I expected ever to open with you, must, I suppose, be irksome to you as myself, I will be as brief as possible. I will speak to no points but what are directly in answer

to your last ; and if, contrary to my intentions, my letter should be drawn out to any length, I hope you will the more readily excuse it, when I promise you that it is the last I will send you on this very disagreeable subject.

“ If you ever spoke those memorable words mentioned in my last, you must easily recollect to whom they were spoken. It was needless, therefore, for me to point out the particular person, especially as it was not by him they were reported to me. I told you I could hardly believe you capable of having uttered them, and hoped that if you favoured me with an answer, you could and would have assured me that you never did. If you did, I must say, (as you do of my suspicions,) they were unworthy of you ; and it is no wonder that I should desire the true state of the case to be made known, rather than be under the imputation which they carried with them.

“ My mention of Shirley was purely accidental, and never meant to convey the sense which you have extracted ; but, if my expressions with their gloss upon them can be interpreted as glancing in the least towards *debtor and creditor*, I take shame upon myself for having made use of them. However, you have been more than even with me by what you say of a certain person. I am quite of Lockit’s opinion that, among good friends, whatever they say or do, goes for nothing. That person, I am sure, has always had the greatest respect for you ; and, if there were any offensive words carried to you, they weré occasioned by some irritating expressions brought from you. Spaniels who will fetch and carry may be useful ; but, whenever they lay hold of any thing, they do so tumble and disfigure it, that, when it comes out of their mouths, one can scarce discover it to be the same. The words thrown out before company I do not

remember, but I think it very possible for you to have misconceived them, as I see you did what I said of my not being able to read the part of Lord Ogleby. I might intend it as a sincere compliment to your talent as an actor, but most certainly never meant a reflection on your abilities as an author. There are characters where the writer must necessarily leave a great deal to the player; Lord Ogleby is one of them; and I know no player that can so well fill up such passages as yourself. I am sorry to find, after having for so many years past opened my heart to you very freely, that you should suppose that I would rather choose to ask what could not be granted, than to tell you my doubts of your portion of the work; did I ever deal that way with you in any other matter? I hate all crooked politics. I have written in concert before, and I have seen more manuscripts than ever I desire to see again; but I cannot tax myself with having in one instance dissembled my real sentiments. Why then should you, my particular friend, suspect me of trifling with you? Why might not I reprehend what I disliked without your immediately crying, *I am always very ready to give up what I write*, as if it was a quality peculiar to yourself? and why might not I confess what I approved without suspicion of flattery or dissimulation?

“ You tell me that you are greatly deceived if you cannot produce some persons, among which is one of my own friends, who can attest that I knew of your resolution not to act in a new piece, before the season commenced—you are very greatly deceived indeed. May I never be believed to speak one word of truth, and I know no greater curse, if I had the least conception of it till the time mentioned at large in my last letter! Nay, in some fond moment, I had flattered myself that though

you never regularly list yourself again in the service of the public, you might, perhaps, be tempted to act as a volunteer in *The Clandestine Marriage*. I was even weak enough to communicate these hopes to a particular friend, who was of our counsel. You see from what a mountain of hope I have fallen, and cannot wonder if I have received some little shock. On the whole it was not my unfriendly and unreasonable demand, but your long reserve, and most unexpected denial of what I thought would never have been questioned, that has occasioned our difference.

“I cannot reconcile your desiring the play to be considered as solely mine, with your complaints of being allowed to have any determination in the disposal of the comedy, when you had a share in it ; but if you now claim the right of your affirmative voice, as in your letter to Clutterbuck you laid your claim to a negative one, you are welcome, if you please, to put the play into rehearsal ; but as it is against my opinion, I hope you will not be farther offended that I give myself no concern about it.

“I have sent you the fifth act as you desired ; but have had neither leisure nor inclination to compare it with that left by your brother yesterday. You know that it was my opinion that it wanted retrenching ; but for near two months I have been totally incapable of that task, as I could never, without pain, turn my eyes or thoughts on *The Clandestine Marriage* — this unhappy comedy, as you very properly call it.

“You take great advantage of my acknowledgment of my own peevishness, and in one part of your letter seem to imply it deserved a harder name. You are pleased also to bandy about the words *unfriendly* and *unreasonable*, very liberally, both in your letter to me and to Dr. Clutterbuck. The fact must speak for itself, and declare

on which side friendship and reason has been most violated ; wherefore, all the notice I shall take of those marks of your ill-humour, is to wish that you may find all your other acquaintances less peevish, and more friendly, and more reasonable, and more faithful, than

“ Your old friend,

“ GEORGE COLMAN.”

These letters are curious, as relates to the authorship of the comedy, the quarrel, and the appearance of Garrick as Lord Ogleby. It would seem, as it has been generally believed, that he wrote that ingenious part for himself, and that he had from the first, agreed with Colman to act it. I do not, therefore, think it a far-fetched inference to say from these vouchers, that the quarrel had tended to make him dislike the part, and was the cause of his resigning it to King. It has been supposed, that to avoid the positive identity of manner with Lord Chalkstone, in his own farce of *Lethe*, he made the surrender of the part ; for the two characters are greatly similar : and perhaps it had some influence in determining him.

But there is a still more curious circumstance connected with the authorship of this celebrated play, than even the squabble between Garrick and Colman. The piece is a plagiarism from *The False Concord*, a farce acted at Covent Garden, March 20, 1764, for the benefit of Woodward ; but not printed. The author was the Rev. James Townley, Master of Merchant Taylor's School.* In the farce were three characters, Lord Lavender, Mr. Suds, a soap-boiler, and a pert valet, which were transplanted, with the dialogue of some

* See Note on Garrick's Life.

scenes, into *The Clandestine Marriage*, under the names of Lord Ogleby, Mr. Sterling, and Brush. These facts were first made public by Mr. Roberdeau, the gentleman who married a daughter of Mr. Townley.

But to return to King. Mrs. Inchbald has said of the character of Lord Ogleby, in which he was so distinguished, that "it is an evidence of the fluctuation of manners, modes, and opinions—forty years ago, it was reckoned so natural a representation of a man of fashion, that several noblemen were said to have been in the author's thoughts when he designed the character; now no part is so little understood in the play; and his foibles seem so discordant with the manly faults of the present time, that his good qualities cannot atone for them." This, however, is shallow criticism, for it has been justly said in reply, that "considered merely as a delineation of manners, Lord Ogleby is no doubt a fleeting and fugacious being; but the foundation of his artificial character is so noble, so generous, and so kindly, that, whenever it can find a proper representative, it must continue to excite our sympathies." And certainly this more acute observation has been confirmed by the reputation which Mr. Farren has acquired in it, in our own time. The manners of the play are, perhaps, a little obsolete, inasmuch as comedy depends so much in representing "the manners living as they rise" correctly; but Lord Ogleby is one of those felicitous conceptions that will remain ever green, flourishing as long as Nature can delight and affectations be ridiculous.

From his appearance in Lord Ogleby, King is commonly said to have possessed the confidence of Garrick—it would be more just to allege the reverse; for among the Garrick papers there are no important traces of the

fact; and the following letters respecting an important incident in King's life, though they showed the strong attachment of the actor to the manager, help but little to prove it was reciprocal.

“Saturday, April 29, 1769.

“Mr. Garrick's compliments to Mr. King: though he is seldom surprised at what may happen in a theatre, yet he would be obliged to Mr. King if he would let him know, by a note, what he was pleased to say of him and the farce of *The Invasion*, to Mr. Hopkins. Mr. Garrick assures Mr. King, that he will not send his answer to the prompter, but to himself.”

The inference from this note is, that some of the common theatrical tattle, to which Garrick is alleged to have been too sensitive, had at this time disturbed him; all that I have been able to trace concerning it is, that about two years prior, there was an entertainment called *The Invasion* then in the hands of the actors, as appears by a letter from King to Garrick, dated Liverpool, 24th July 1767, respecting which the writer says,

“As to *The Invasion*, I think it would be proper that I should keep my part, and Parsons be put into Snip. Should Yates think better of it, and take the covenant, you will undoubtedly choose to have him reinstated. Parsons has played the Harlequin one night for me: now, by this means, should sickness or any accident befall Yates or me, you will be at a certainty; the entertainment need not be stopped, as he will then be ready to supply the place of either of us—Am I right?”

Those who are curious in such matters, may be able to settle this point by referring to the play-bills of the time, and as I do not deem it of any importance, I have only to mention, that in 1759 a farce called *Invasion* was printed, but never acted. It only ridicules the unnecessary apprehensions which were then entertained on account of the threatened invasion of the flat-bottomed boats from France. But there was another entertainment, called *Harlequin's Invasion*, a Christmas gambol, also brought out in 1759, and often performed at Drury Lane. The plan of this, however, is a supposed invasion made by Harlequin and his train upon the domains of Shakspeare. The characters are made to speak, and the catastrophe is the defeat of Harlequin. The dialogue was furnished by Mr. Garrick, who originally wrote some parts of it to serve a favourite performer at Bartholomew Fair. It is to this piece that the misunderstanding, I imagine, relates.

But the letter to which I particularly alluded, as tending to illustrate the nature of the friendship between King and Garrick, is the following, in answer to the note of the latter.

“DEAR SIR,

Russell Street, April 30, 1759.

“As to what passed between Mr. Hopkins and me concerning *The Invasion*—as I have a better opinion of his integrity than of my own memory, I should have referred you to him for the account, had you not desired to have it under my hand—I have committed it to paper, I hope with a proper regard for truth, and as minutely as I am able.

“You are, I find, displeased with my conduct: no one thing on earth can make me more unhappy—I have offended

by giving my sentiments *to*, and sending a message *by*, the prompter. Let me, if I can, justify myself. When Mr. Lacy and you are on the spot, if I have any thing that I think necessary to communicate to both, I always trouble Mr. G. Garrick, who kindly, in such cases, becomes a middle man, and acts for all parties. When you retire for a time, I look on Mr. G. Garrick as your representative ; if I have any thing in the way of business to settle with *the managers*, I think it necessary for some other person to act for me. Who so likely to find the managers together as the prompter? Nay, I believe in every theatre where they are not happy enough to have a person of so useful and friendly a turn as Mr. G. Garrick, messages relative to the business of the stage are sent or given to the prompter, and I have ever thought it a part of his office to receive and deliver them. You desire I would let you know what I was pleased to say about *you* and the farce. I declare, upon my honour, that I do not recollect that your name was mentioned, nor do I remember that there was any thing particular said about the farce ; but, as I have said before, I must refer you to Mr. Hopkins ; some parts of the conversation may have slipped my memory, and I have not the least apprehension of his doing me injustice. I shall only say, that it was out of my power, either on this or on any other occasion, whenever your name could be mentioned, to treat it otherwise than with a warmth of respect little short of enthusiasm ; and I defy the world, replete as it is with rascals, to produce one base enough to contradict me.

“I have since your departure for Bath been most indelicately treated in many particulars, which I now shall never trouble you with a mention of. I flattered myself for some days past, that on your return to town, I should

again have the pleasure of taking you by the hand, and, as usual, trusted you with every thing that had made, or could make me happy ; on the contrary, your desiring an explanation in *a note*, seemed to forbid my waiting on you. Depend upon it, dear Sir, I shall not become a trespasser. I *know*—I *feel* myself unworthily treated. I must and will assert, though that assertion shall never be made but to yourself, that your suspecting any part of the warmth of my attachment to you is uncandid, and your severity (for I shall never call *coolness* from *you* by any other name) unwarrantable. I have for some time rejoiced in supposing myself an object of your esteem—while you seemed to think me deserving of it, I could have died to convince you it was not improperly placed; but you have suspected me, and I shall say but little more. Had I been a prince, I should have prided myself in having Mr. Garrick for my friend; but were I this moment shirtless, I would not wholly give up the duty I owe myself merely because he is my employer.

“ I am ever and shall be, dear Sir,

“ Your most ardent well-wisher,

“ And very humble servant,

“ THOMAS KING.

“ You were some time ago anxious lest some of your letters should fall into improper hands ; I take the liberty to inclose your last for your reperusal, and beg you will indulge me by burning it. Such a note found after my decease would go near to convince some friends whose good opinion I covet, that I had most basely forfeited the favour of a man whose friendly attachment to me was for some time my greatest, almost my only boast.”

What inference are we to draw from Garrick having preserved the note so carefully?

Other letters from King to Garrick have been preserved; but while they evince the greatest attachment to the manager, the proof is not so clear that Garrick's friendship was equally ardent. He was, indeed, too anxious to build himself a name, ever to feel that warmth of regard to any man which King professed for him.

When Garrick sold his share in Drury Lane theatre, and was about to retire, King, it has been reported, also wished to take leave of the public, but was induced, both by the seller and buyer, to remain. In 1777, when *The School for Scandal* was produced, he is supposed to have added a shade of variety to his fame, by the manner of his performance as Sir Peter Teazle, which, without so much of refinement and affectation as his Lord Ogleby, displayed a no less just conception of the peculiarities of an old gentleman of a graver cast. He likewise performed Puff in *The Critic*.

It is singular, that over *The School for Scandal* a mystery hangs not unlike that attached to *The Clandestine Marriage*, for it is asserted that the plan was taken from a manuscript which had been previously delivered at Drury Lane theatre by a young lady; and undoubtedly a rumour has ever prevailed that it was not thoroughly the work of Sheridan.* I have heard, long ago, an old

* Every one at all interested in dramatic history, has heard of the plagiarism imputed to Sheridan of *The School for Scandal*; and in some respects, there is no doubt of the fact, to a certain extent, of that plagiarism. An old friend, who was familiar with the playhouses in his youth, has written to me since I began the collection of materials for this work, the following account of the story:—"Considerably more than forty years have elapsed since Sheridan's plagiarism was bruited,

friend tell, that on the night on which it was first represented, the young lady was in the theatre, and was so moved when she saw in it so many of her own rejected scenes, that she became much agitated, and was obliged to be taken out of the theatre; soon after which she fell into bad health and died.

In the mean time King had been part proprietor and sole manager of the Bristol theatre, a property which he sold, and purchased three-fourths of Sadler's Wells; but this or rather, since it first came to my knowledge; but you shall have the particulars as distinctly as I can report them at this date. Mr. Sheridan was in habits of particular intimacy with the Richardson family (of which family, by the by, you may procure some notices). Miss Richardson, a very accomplished young lady, wrote a play, which Mr. Sheridan undertook to bring out forthwith at Drury Lane theatre. A season passed over, but, to the great disappointment of the young lady, the play was not produced. When she protested, as she often did, against this delay, he adroitly shifted the subject, strenuously urging her to cultivate a talent in which she excelled, that of painting. Another season drew towards its close, when out came *The School for Scandal*. But a small progress had been made in the representation, when Miss R. fainted, and was taken from the pit of the theatre; so strong was the impression on her mind, that her own piece had been pillaged, and the materials worked up for the performance in question. It was told that she did not long survive this mortification."

"But farther, I was assured by a gentleman, John Oswald, who, among other literary engagements, reported at that time for *The Oracle*, that Mrs. Phillips, the mother of the celebrated vocalist Mrs. Crouch, had in her possession the rough draft of Miss Richardson's comedy, which he had seen, and which, if his testimony is to be confided in, established the plagiarism beyond all doubt. I was also promised a sight of it, but somehow missed the occasion.

"The song in *The Duenna*, beginning with

‘ I could never lustre see
In eyes that would not look on me,’

was not written by Sheridan, but was taken without leave or licence, when his back was turned, from the escrutoire of an intimate friend, the author of several pleasant dramatic pieces."

he afterwards parted with, when he was invited to undertake the management of Drury Lane, in which situation he continued till 1788, when he visited Dublin and Edinburgh with distinguished success. Returning to London, I find that in 1789 he performed at Covent Garden, but he was soon after induced to resume his situation at Drury Lane. In the summer of 1792 he performed at the Haymarket; and on the 24th of May 1802, he took his leave in the part of Sir Peter Teazle.

His performance on this trying occasion was distinguished for equal vigour and taste, and evinced by the powers he displayed, and the applause he received, that he had judiciously chosen that moment for his retreat, when pity was not likely to be felt at an exit that was to be forever; for in the Green-room as well as before the curtain, it was regarded with sentiments appropriate towards one who had so long contributed so much and so excellently to the cheerfulness of the public. The performers presented him with a silver cup and salver, as a testimony of their esteem for his character as a man and his merits as a comedian. He did not, however, very long enjoy the repose of his retirement; for, on the 11th December 1805, he expired in his house in Store Street, Bedford Square, and was buried in St. Paul's, Covent Garden.

In private life he was amusing and respectable, replete with anecdotes, which he told with spirit and enlivened with mimicry. But he was subject to one great vice,—an unquenchable passion for gaming, the fluctuating results of which embarrassed his age and sharpened the anguish of his infirmities. Of his literary talent it is unnecessary to speak, as his two dramatic pieces are laid on the shelf, and have rested there for many years, destined, probably, for an interminable sleep.

THOMAS HOLCROFT.

THE volumes of biography afford few more affecting memoirs than the account which Holcroft has himself given of his youth; it shows at once a poor boy contending with all the calamities that beset miserable poverty, and of native genius struggling with difficulties. It may be that his talents and taste were not transcendent; but it is impossible to contemplate the ills, the hardships, and the privations of his early years, without regarding his career as wonderful in the annals of literature. Originally a beggar child in rags, afterwards a common Newmarket stable-boy, then a humble cobbler, he became an actor, and in the end, a celebrated author, contributing to the theatrical enjoyments of a great nation in its refined capital, and of the most polished circles of a high aristocratic society.

This remarkable person was born in Orange Court, Leicester Fields, London, on the 10th of December 1745, old style. The reminiscences of his childhood appear to consist of such incidents as are common in the humble circumstances of his birth; and the character of his father, restless and roving, seems to have been of all others the most likely to have bred his son for ignominy. But these defects were redeemed by an unchangeable integrity, a purity of heart which often, like the precious stone on the dunghill, adorns the meanest condition.

Holcroft's description of the dispositions of his early associates is pleasing to humanity, and must bespeak respect, even from the great for the simple annals of the poor.

A good-natured apprentice-boy who took him to school, and made him afterwards a present of the History of Parismus and Parismenes, with the Seven Champions of Christendom, claims largely on the sympathy of those who are blest with that discernment which discovers worth beneath tatters and deformity. "He was," says Holcroft, "an exceedingly hard-featured youth, with thick lips, wide-mouth, a broad nose, and his face very much marked with the small-pox; but very kind and good-tempered. I perfectly remember his carrying me in my petticoats, consoling me as we went, and giving me something nice to eat." This, with his general character when he visited Holcroft's father in misfortune, ever with something kind to say, and good to give to the little boy, completes the outline of a character common in humble life, but seldom described.

Holcroft was a singularly precocious child; at five years old he learned to play on the violin, but his proficiency was blighted by a prideful remark of his uncle, who inquired with contempt of his father—"If he intended to make a fiddler of the boy?" The instrument was, in consequence, laid aside, and the art of playing was soon forgotten. But nevertheless, Holcroft says, that to this period his infantine life had passed under more favourable circumstances than are common to the children of the poor. When he was about six years old, the scene changed, hardships began, and sufferings increased.

It would seem that his father's affairs in their little sphere then became embarrassed. On a sudden he

broke up his household, and went into Berkshire, about thirty miles from London. The house there was situated at the corner of the road, close to a small common. In this retired spot his father began to renew to his son the lessons he had received in reading at school. In them, however, Holcroft made no particular progress, till he thought of catching at once all the sounds he had been taught from the arrangement of the letters; after which his progress became so rapid as to surprise his teacher. The description of the process is not, however, very clear, and the reader must exercise his ingenuity to comprehend it.

At that early period he showed not only talent, but a degree of courage and perseverance which would have distinguished a much older boy. When only little more than six years old, his father had occasion to go to London at a later hour than usual, and obtained, for expedition, the loan of a horse from a neighbour, on condition that it should be returned that evening. He then mounted and placed our hero behind him to take back the horse. How far he carried him, Holcroft could not recollect, but it was over Ascot Heath, where, about an hour before dark, he alighted, leaving the boy on horseback, and giving him directions for the way home.

Homeward the child proceeded, anxious to arrive before it was quite dark, but unluckily, soon after parting from his father, when no human being was in sight, the horse stumbled and threw off the rider's hat. To have lost his hat would have been a terrible misfortune, he therefore alighted to pick it up, but when he attempted to remount he found it impossible, all he could do was to drag the sluggish animal along, and to cry bitterly. Twilight was closing, and he was alone on the

common. At length the white railing of Ascot Heath race-course came in sight; with difficulty he drew the horse to the railing, on which he clambered and resealed himself in the saddle: an achievement of this kind was undoubtedly remarkable in so young a boy, but it was the forerunner of the address and spirit which he afterwards displayed as a groom at Newmarket. It would seem that both with alert discernment and animal courage he was particularly endowed; but he confesses that he was, nevertheless, when a child, full of superstitions; when magpies crossed, or did not cross his path, he deemed them ominous of good or ill luck; and when he walked he often pored upon the ground for pins or nails, which, according as they lay, foreboded misfortune. He was not, however, tainted with the dread of spirits, nor aught of all the apparitional world revealed by ghosts and goblins.

When his father had resided about twelve months in Berkshire, he began that wandering life which threw his son into such jeopardy, and from which nothing but some indestructible principle could have preserved him.

His young remembrance recalled in after-life circumstances which convinced him he had been carried to London, where his parents grew very poor, and his mother was obliged to become a way-side pedlar; with a basket on her arm of small haberdashery, pins, needles, and tape, and her little boy trotting at her heels, she tramped the villages to hawk her pedlary.

With her husband the mother and son went to Cambridge, and afterwards traversed the neighbouring villages. In one, remarkable for its neatness, the name of which is not mentioned, their destitution amounted to that calamitous degree, that Holcroft says himself, "Here

it was that I was either encouraged or commanded one day to go by myself from house to house and beg." In this humiliating condition his ingenuity and the various tales he told procured him much kindness; but when he returned to his parents and recited the falsehoods he had invented, his father became greatly agitated and exclaimed to his wife, "This must not be; the poor child will become a common-place liar, a hedge-side rogue; he will learn to pilfer, turn a confirmed vagrant, go on the highway when he is older, and get hanged! He shall never go on such errands again!"

This affecting scene is one of the many instances in which reality surpasses fiction. The whole range of the drama cannot parallel an incident so pathetic:—A wretched family is in a state of such extreme destitution as to be obliged to send their little boy to beg his bread from door to door. His natural sagacity teaches him that the charity of man is only to be obtained by sympathy; and his talent, young as he is, enables him to gain compassion to so great a degree, that he returns to his wretched parents at their place of rendezvous under the hedge, and exultingly displays the alms he has gathered. In relating how he had exerted his ingenuity, his father, though a wandering vagabond, has yet virtue enough to fear the consequences; at first he is pleased with the address of the child, he inquires his method, and one falsehood after another is repeated,—the poor man is astonished, his agitation rises to horror as the child proceeds, and, forgetting their mutual abjectness, he prefers starvation,—for such is the effect of his resolution,—to a repetition of the risk; but the heart of the reader must supply the comment.

The tear forgot as soon as shed, is one of the boons of

childhood; whatever may have been his father's anguish, to himself the impression was but the shadow of a passing cloud, and the common incidents of boyish admiration were sufficient to banish, though they could not obliterate them from his mind. The heart of youth is smooth, and sorrow cannot lay hold of it long, but the breast of manhood has many cells where griefs and care nestle and abide.

Holcroft imagined that by a scene at Wisbeach fair his ardent love of the dramatic art was first excited,—the performance of a quack-doctor and his merry-andrew. And, really, when I reflect on the enjoyment I have had myself in such sights, yea, even unto this day, I sadden in contemplating the mirthless destiny of the rising generation. Alas! fairs and shows, with all their pageantry, are rapidly dispersing, and that stern churl, Justice Reason, with Utility the constable, now rule in the boothless and deserted market-place.

The apparition of the doctor and his zany was, says Holcroft, “a pleasure so unexpected, so exquisite, so rich and rare, that I followed the merry-andrew and his drummer through the streets, gliding under arms and between legs, never long three yards apart from him; almost bursting with laughter at his extreme comicality; tracing the gridirons, punchinellos, and pantomime figures on his jacket; wondering at the manner in which he twirled his hat in the air, and again caught it so dexterously on his head. My curiosity did not abate when he examined to see if there was not some little devil hid within it, with a grotesque squint of his eyes, twist of his nose, and the exclamation, ‘Oh, ho! have I caught you, Mr. Imp?’ making a snatch at the inside of his hat, grasping at something, opening his hand, finding nothing

in it, and then crying with a stupid stare, 'No, you see, good folks, the devil of any devil is here!' Then again, when he returned to the stage, followed by an eager crowd, and in an imperious tone was ordered by his master to mount, to see the comical jump he gave, alighting half upright, roaring with pretended pain, pressing his hip, declaring he had put out his collar-bone, crying to his master to come and cure it; receiving a kick, springing up and making a somerset;—thanking his master kindly for making him well, yet the moment his back was turned mocking him with wry faces; answering the doctor, whom I should have thought extremely witty if Andrew had not been there, with jokes so apposite and whimsical as never failed to produce roars of laughter; all which was to me assuredly

‘The feast of reason and the flow of soul;’

as it was the first scene of the kind I had ever witnessed, so it was the most ecstatic.”

It will readily be admitted that a life so little superior in comfort and pursuit to that of the common gypsies, was not favourable to the cultivation of literary predilections, or likely to afford much insight to the manners of the world; but, undoubtedly, with innate humour it was highly so to the acquisition of that grotesque and unabashed absurdity which makes up often much of the entertainment of the stage, where excess and extravagance are in their proper element. At the same time it must be allowed, when we consider the slender means which players in general possess of observing the details of society, that it is not probable their exhibitions of the manners peculiar to the different classes, are ever likely to be very accurate.

From the time that Holcroft began to travel the country with his father and mother, he had little leisure to acquire learning. He was too much oppressed by fatigue, hunger, cold, and nakedness ; still, as often as any opportunity presented itself, though without aim or object, he indulged his inclination in reading, and once for the prize of a halfpenny he got the ballad of "Chevy Chase" by heart.

When about the age of eleven or twelve his hardships had brought on an asthma, at Nottingham, from which he long suffered severely, and while in that town he witnessed a public execution, which had such an effect on him that he never forgot the spectacle of the dying culprit. It seems, however, to have left no other impression on his memory than disgust and anguish, a circumstance which, perhaps, serves to show that his genius was not of a very high kind ; for incidents that leave a strong impression on minds of that endowment, become to them often the germs and energies of striking and original conceptions.

His health, during the time he stayed with his father at Nottingham, improved, and during the races the question occurred to him whether it would not be possible to procure the place of a stable-boy at Newmarket. At this time, says he, " I was, in point of clothing, in a very mean, not to say ragged, condition. The stable-boys I saw at Nottingham were healthy, clean, well fed, well clothed, and remarkable rather for their impudence than seeming to live under any kind of fear or hardship. Except their impudence, I liked every thing else I saw about them ; and concluded that, if I could obtain so high a situation as this, I should be very fortunate."

The result of these reflections led him to make the

attempt, and he was, in the end, engaged. His own account of his occupations as a groom at Newmarket is exceedingly curious; it may, perhaps, be less picturesque than the description of his younger years, but it is interesting, as affording a view of the manners and customs of a profession which can only exist in the most luxurious or barbarous state of society. It however belongs not to the nature of this work to relate his adventures among the race-horses, in which he describes himself as having been rather distinguished; but, while he was a stable-boy at Newmarket, a period of two years and a half, he taught himself to write, improved his reading, acquired singing and arithmetic, and his mind began to open to the virtues and duties of life. In consequence of observing how little his pursuits and amusements were calculated to promote either, he left Newmarket and joined his father in London, who at that time kept a cobbler's stall in South Audley Street.

He continued to work with his father for some time, and spent what leisure and savings he could afford in reading and in procuring books. When about nineteen he travelled to Liverpool with the old man, whose disposition to change his place continued unsubdued, and, in 1764, he married.

At Liverpool he undertook the superintendence of a school for children, but, in the course of the year, he returned to London, where he resumed his trade as a shoemaker, yet gleaned knowledge with all the industry in his power. It must, however, be admitted, that he possessed some of his father's unsettled humour, for he hated his trade, and being attacked again with the asthma, he became anxious for another employment.

At this period his situation was, however, distressing;

except during the time he had been at Newmarket, he had felt constant poverty, but the effects now preyed upon his mind more than on his body. He ruminated on the advantages of a good education, and his inability to receive or to pay for instruction. But the materials which he had collected in his desultory course were destined to supply the defects that he so greatly bemoaned, and were even then working to an issue.

At this time he could not resist the inclination he felt to commit his thoughts to paper, and the editor of the *Whitehall Evening Post* so far approved of his essays as to pay him five shillings a column for them. These essays, crude as his education had been, must have possessed some obvious merit, for one of them was transcribed into the *Annual Register*. About this time he attempted to set up a little day-school somewhere in the country, but his effort was ineffectual; all that depended on himself was meritoriously done, he lived frugally on the merest necessities, but obtained only one scholar, so he gave it up and returned to London.

He procured there a situation with Mr. Granville Sharp, and resided in his family as a servant and clerk. It would seem that his wife was now dead, for she is no longer mentioned. During the time he was in Mr. Sharp's family, he spent his leisure in a reading-room or at a spouting-club, the members of which rehearsed, in turn, passages from plays. This Mr. Sharp considered an idle waste of time, and, after several attempts to cure him of what he deemed a bad habit, he at length dismissed him.

He was now once more friendless in the streets of London, and formed the determination to enlist for India, when he was met by one of the persons whom he had

known at the spouting-club, and disclosed to him the desperation of his circumstances. This acquaintance was a kind of scout employed by Macklin to pick up young adventurers of talent to go over to play at Dublin. By him he was conducted to the master of actors, whom they found seated on his couch by the fire-side, on which, whenever he felt himself drowsy, he went to rest both day and night, and, in consequence, was sometimes not in bed for a fortnight together. The scout and our hero were followed by Macklin's wife into the room, who brought him a basin of tea and some toast, with each of which he found fifty faults in the surliest manner. His countenance, as it appeared to Holcroft, was the most forbidding he had ever beheld, and age, which had mauled his teeth, had not improved the expression of his mouth.

After desiring the young candidate for the favour of Thespis to sit down, he eyed him very narrowly for some time, and then asked him,

“What has put it into your head to turn actor?”

After a short pause, Holcroft replied, “I suppose it is genius, but it is very possible I may be mistaken.”

“Yes,” exclaimed Macklin, “that’s possible enough; and, Sir, you are not the first that I have known to be so mistaken;” and he smiled a ghastly grin at his own satire.

While Macklin was drinking his tea, they talked on indifferent subjects, and he condescended to allow that Holcroft had the appearance of being an ingenuous young man. He then desired him to speak a speech out of some play, which being done, he remarked that he had never heard a young spouter speak naturally, and was not surprised that our hero did not, but, as he seemed tractable,

if he would call again next day, he would answer him farther.

Holcroft and his friend then adjourned to the Black Lion, in Russell Street, then a house of call for the players. Here they learned that Foote was mustering a company for Edinburgh, and Macklin's manner not having won the heart of our hero, he resolved to apply to Foote. Accordingly, shaking off his companion, he hastened to the wit's house in Suffolk Street, and had the good fortune to find him and his amanuensis at breakfast.

"Well," said Foote, "I guess your business, young gentleman, by the sheepishness of your manner ; you have got the theatrical cacoethes ; you have rubbed your shoulder against the scene ; hey, is it not so ?"

Holcroft acknowledged it was. "Well, and what great hero would you wish to personate ? Hamlet, or Richard, or Othello, or who ?"

Our adventurer replied that he distrusted his capacity for either.

"Indeed !" said Foote, "that's a wonderful sign of grace—I have been teased these many years by all the spouters in London, of which honourable fraternity I dare say you are a member ; for I can perceive no stage varnish, none of your true strolling brass lacquer on your face."

"No, indeed, Sir."

"I thought so ; well, Sir, I never saw a spouter before that did not want to surprise the town in Pierre or Lothario, or some character that demands all the address and every requisite of a master in the art. But come, give us here a touch of your quality ; a speech ;—here's a

youngster," pointing to the amanuensis, "will roar Jaffier against Pierre."

Accordingly he held the book, and at it they blaired. For a little while Holcroft restrained his wrath, but at last they both roared so, that it would have done your heart good to have heard them.

Foote smiled at their vehemence, but his opinion was not discouraging, for he told Holcroft, that with respect to giving the meaning of the words, he was more correct than he had expected.

"But," said he, "like other novices, you seem to imagine that all excellence lies in the lungs; whereas such violent exertions should be used very sparingly, for (besides that these two gentlemen, instead of straining their throats, are supposed to be in common conversation,) if an actor make no reserve of his powers, how is he to rise according to the tone of the passion?"

Holcroft afterwards displayed his musical talents, which Foote also approved, but, as he was inexperienced in the business of the stage, told him his salary would at first be very low—not more than one pound per week.

Although these two interviews are amusing of their kind, and Foote appears to have treated him tolerably, it is impossible to repress a smile at the idea of persons who have never been in any situation to see good manners, undertaking to represent not only those of gentlemen, but even of Princes and Kings. Holcroft, however, was pleased with the interview, but, as he had promised, he called again on Macklin, who on his second visit gave him a part to read in a piece, of which he was himself the author.

When he had finished, he considered himself bound to be candid, and accordingly mentioned the offer he had

from Foote, and finally it was agreed that Holcroft should have thirty shillings a-week to be prompter, and to act occasionally small parts. Upon this engagement he proceeded to Dublin, and having borrowed six guineas from Macklin, in anticipation of his salary, he rewarded his spouting friend with a guinea, redeemed his clothes in pawn, and left London elated.

About the end of September 1770, he reached Dublin, but he early took a prejudice against the country, and as the theatre did not open till November, his finances became exhausted. His situation again was desperate, and the wants of it were exasperated by an antipathy which he cherished to the manager, who does not appear indeed to have been very conciliatory; nor was Holcroft himself aware of his own deficiency, in what his biographer Hazlitt calls "the honeyed arts of adulation." He, however, endured what he conceived were the insults of malice and ignorance for five months, till the money he had borrowed on his salary was repaid, when the manager immediately discharged him. Thus was he again thrown back upon the hands of Providence; nothing but misery and famine stood before his eyes; he was penniless, and he conceived himself to have been unworthily treated.

He then quitted Dublin and sailed for Parkgate, in March 1771. The passage was rough; the packet was driven by the wind as far north as the Frith of Clyde, and they were seven days in the Channel, and almost starving, when they made the Isle of Man.

A dead calm succeeded to the storm, which the sailors, with their wonted superstition, attributed to a Jonas being on board. This fancy they inculcated on the poor Irish passengers, and Holcroft was the individual on

whom their suspicions lighted, especially when they discovered he had been a player.

While they were in this state of mind, he sauntered off the quarter-deck with a volume of *Hudibras* in his hand, and walking to the other end of the vessel, found himself encircled by two or three fellows with the most ferocious looks, gazing at him with aversion. The peculiarity of their manner excited his notice, and one of them, quivering with passion, asked him if he had not better get a prayer-book than be reading plays upon that blessed day, adding, "You are the Jonas, and by *Jasus* the ship will never see land till you are tossed overboard, you and your plays along with you; and sure it will be a great deal better that such a wicked wretch as you should go to the bottom, than that all the poor innocent souls in the ship should be lost."

This speech disconcerted him, but he still retained presence of mind enough to assure them that it was not a play-book he was reading, and opened it to convince them, as he sidled away to the quarter-deck. Without any other adventure he reached Chester.

At that city he wrote to several strolling companies offering his services, and he entered into an engagement with one that was then at Leeds. But his evil genius was still predominant; the affairs of the company when he joined were in disorder, the actors were quarrelling with one another, and he discovered, to his humiliation, that though some of his new associates could scarcely read, they could, from habit, speak better on the stage than he could.

The bickerings of the players soon came to a head, and they gradually deserted the manager till he was obliged to dissolve the company. In the mean time

Holcroft received a letter inviting him to join another set of actors then at Hereford; but it had been written nearly a month before, and that city was a hundred and sixty miles off; the state, however, of his finances was such that he was obliged to decide at once. Accordingly, with a heavy heart and a light purse, he began the journey. On the fifth day he entered an inn on the road-side, eight-and-twenty miles from Hereford, with nine-pence in his pocket, and in the morning made his exit pennyless; nevertheless he proceeded on and reached the town. Faint, weary, and ready to drop with hunger, he traversed the streets in quest of the manager, who was nowhere to be found. He was then directed to a barber, his brother, and upon the family observing his weakness, he told them his journey, and that for the day he had not broken his fast except at the brook; and yet they heard him without offering the least refreshment.

When the players understood that a fresh member was come to join them, their own experience taught them to discover his situation, and they were not a little incensed at the story of the barber; for the want of kindness and generosity is not the vice of their profession.

The company into which Holcroft was introduced was that of the Kembles, and the father of Mrs. Siddons was the manager; he continued with it some time, and went in their circuit to several places, acting, however, but inferior parts. An occurrence took place while he was with this party which richly deserves commemoration, not only for the beauty of the anecdote itself, but for a premature glimpse which Mrs. Siddons, then a child, afforded of her powers that yet lurked in the germ. A benefit had been fixed for some of the family, in which

she was to perform some juvenile part. The taste of the audience rebelled at her extreme youth, the house was shaken with the uproar, and the child, disconcerted, was bashfully retiring, when her mother, alarmed, rushed forward, and leading her to the front of the stage, made her repeat the appropriate fable of the Boys and the Frogs, which completely appeased the clamour; it was, indeed, apposite to the condition of the family at the time.

Some difference with old Kemble occasioned Holcroft to leave this company, from which he joined Stanton's, and made excursions to the North of England. While with Stanton he married again, but though in the character of his wife there was much to have increased his happiness, it was embittered by distress and disappointment, and in what should have been his felicity there was only a doubling of his sorrow. In his extremity he applied to Garrick, but without success, and soon after his wife died. At the period of that event he was in Booth's company, which he had joined at Carlisle in the autumn of 1774.

Of his merits at this time, his own account, in his letter to Garrick, is thus; "I have played in the country with applause, and my friends, I am afraid, have flattered me; some of them have ranked me among the sons of genius, and I have at times been silly enough to believe them. I have succeeded best in low comedy and old men. I understand music very well; something of French, and fencing, and have a very quick memory, as I can repeat any part under four lengths at six hours' notice. I have studied character, situation, dress, deliberation, enunciation, but, above all, the eye and the manner, and have so far succeeded, as to be entirely at

the head of my profession here in all those characters which Nature has any way qualified me for." Indeed, the conditions of his engagement to Booth almost justified this modest account of the qualifications which he deemed fit for the metropolis.

"He engaged," says Hazlitt, "to perform all the old men and principal low-comedy characters; he was to be the *music*, that is, literally, the sole accompaniment to all songs on his fiddle in the orchestra; he undertook to instruct the younger performers in singing and music, and to write out the different casts or parts in every new comedy; and, lastly, he was to furnish the theatre with several new pieces never published, but which he brought with him in manuscript,—among the rest *Dr. Last in his Chariot*; and for all these services, various and important as they were, he was to receive a share and a half of the profits, which generally amounted to between four and five pounds a night, whenever the theatre was opened, that is, three times a week. This proposed salary could not, therefore, amount to more than seventeen or eighteen shillings weekly." To understand, however, what is meant by shares, I may here, in addition to what has already been stated, give Holcroft's account of this matter, important to all strolling-players.

"A company of travelling comedians is a small kingdom, of which the manager is the monarch. Their code of laws seems to have existed, with few material variations, since the days of Shakspeare, who is with great reason the god of their idolatry. The person who is rich enough to furnish a wardrobe and scenes, commences manager, and has his privileges accordingly. If there are twenty persons in the company, for instance, the

manager included, the receipts of the house, after all incidental expenses are deducted, are divided into four-and-twenty shares, four of which are called dead shares, and taken by the manager as payment for the use of his dresses and scenes; to these is added the share he is entitled to as a performer. Our manager (Stanton) had five sons and daughters, all ranked as performers, so that he sweeps eleven shares, nearly half the profits, into his pocket every night."

Booth's establishment, to which Holcroft was attached, belonged originally to one Mills, a Scotchman, and the account of its origin is primitive in the extreme, and brings our imaginations back almost to the earliest eras of the drama. This Mills and his family originally commenced their strolling vocation, by playing nothing but Ramsay's delightful pastoral of *The Gentle Shepherd*, without scenery or music, which they continued to do for several years. As the younger branches of the family grew up, one of them became a scene-painter, and some of the others learned to play on the fiddle, and, in consequence, they then added scenes and music to their representations; afterwards, they enlarged their circuit and crossed the Borders, where they were not, however, so popular as on the other side of the Tweed. They, therefore, after the performance of *The Gentle Shepherd*, which was still the business of the evening, introduced a farce occasionally. Mills's daughters married players; this brought a great accession of ability to the domestic company, so that they were enabled to act regular plays, and by degrees Patie and Roger, with all the other inhabitants of the Pentland hills, were sent adrift. Still, however, during the lifetime of Mills, the whole business of the theatre, even to the shifting of the scenes and the

making up of the dresses, was carried on in the circle of his own family. At his death the properties were purchased by the landlord of an inn at Penrith, and it was by him let out to Booth.

Mrs. Inchbald was playing in this company at Inverness in 1773, from which they went to Glasgow, where, not being permitted to play, they were reduced to the utmost distress, but were liberated by a young Scotchman, who joined them in a frolic—the grandfather, I believe, of the present Sir Michael Shaw Stewart, member for Renfrewshire, at whose instigation they visited the aged town of Cartsdyke, to which Greenock is a modern suburb, and where Mr. Nicholson Stewart, the gentleman alluded to, enacted tragical parts with them.

Holcroft continued in Booth's company about a year and a half, and then joined Bates's. In the year 1777, Shield, the composer, was one of the band in the same company, and they walked together from Stockton-upon-Tees, Holcroft studying on the road Lowth's Grammar and reading Pope's Homer. At this time, being eager to make himself acquainted with all the distinguished English poets, he was seldom without a volume of their works in his pocket.

At Stockton-upon-Tees he became acquainted with Ritson, the antiquary, at that time articled to an attorney in the town, but fonder of poetry than law.

His bias for literature was daily becoming stronger; he had never been satisfied with his employment as a strolling-player, but sighed for the literary advantages of London. In this, perhaps, he formed a correct judgment of himself, for he possessed no particular endowment from Nature to acquire celebrity on the stage. He was naturally long-backed, his grave voice disagreeably harsh,

and his deportment unbendingly stiff. Considering, however, the extraordinary disadvantages which he had to contend with in early life, his career as a player ought to be criticised with indulgence, for it was but an expedient to obtain the means of subsistence. After wandering for seven years as a "poor player," he resolved to try his fortunes in London, where he arrived about the end of 1777.

On his arrival he was anxious to obtain an engagement with Sheridan at Drury Lane, but in vain; as a last desperate resource, when poverty again stood at his elbow, chattering her unvictualled teeth, he sat down and wrote a farce called *The Crisis, or Love and Famine*, which Mrs. Sheridan was prevailed on to read, and this, as he was able to sing in the chorusses, procured him an engagement at twenty shillings a week. His farce was, however, only played once; and his powers as an actor were in no esteem, till Sheridan saw him by chance in the part of Mungo, in *The Padlock*, with which he was so much pleased that he added five shillings to his weekly salary.

During the summer recesses of 1778 and 1779, he made professional excursions to Canterbury, Portsmouth, and Nottingham, and his range of parts in the country were higher, of course, than at Drury Lane; but poverty, the evil genius of his life, not only pursued him still, but brought her fellow fiend, Disease, along with her; for had not the state of his health required a change of air, he says that it would have been more profitable to have remained in London, as by this time he had fairly commenced a literary progress. He had, moreover, his family in town, for, in coming to London, he had married a third wife.

But the grasps of poverty were still unslackened. In a little housekeeping speculation into which he was enticed soon after his marriage, by the advice of an upholsterer, he was completely ruined, and obliged to apply for assistance to several persons to prevent his furniture from being seized. His situation at this period had deep claims on sympathy; he had few friends in London. Shield and Perry, who died proprietor and editor of the *MORNING CHRONICLE*, whom he had known as a stroller with Booth's company in the North, were almost his only intimates, and neither of them were at the time, 1780, in circumstances to afford him much assistance.

At this period an incident occurred, during the trials at the Old Bailey of the rioters in Lord George Gordon's mob, which left an indelible effect on his mind. A young man was brought to the bar, the witness against whom swore that, as he was standing in a shop where he had taken refuge, he saw the prisoner coming down Holborn Hill, at the head of a body of rioters, flourishing a drawn sword. Holcroft, who was taking notes of the evidence, recollected the prisoner's face, and, when the evidence was over, he addressed the judge, and requested that he might be examined. Being admitted, he then declared that he had been present at the real transaction; that he was standing at the bottom of Holborn when the mob passed; that the prisoner was not among them, but that, some time after they were gone by, he had seen the prisoner, who was quietly walking along the street, pick up a sword and carry it away with him. This, said he, was the whole transaction, and the circumstances of his marching at the head of the rioters, and brandishing the weapon, are utterly false. The prisoner was, in consequence, acquitted.

In October 1781, Holcroft's first comedy, *Duplicity*, was acted. It was performed at Covent Garden, received with great applause, and he now considered his fame established; but when the piece was a second time played, for the author's benefit, it did not clear the expenses of the house; Mr. Harris, however, the manager, gave him from the theatre one hundred pounds, and he sold the copyright to the booksellers.

The success of this comedy caused an important change in the views and condition of Holcroft, and, in other respects, the disasters which had hitherto chequered his life with so many sorrows, began to improve their influence. Sheridan had raised his salary to two pounds a week, but, as he did not facilitate his appearance in more considerable parts, Holcroft entertained some thoughts of going to Ireland; for he considered it not only inconsistent with his dignity, but with his interest, as an author, to appear only in the most insignificant parts on the stage.

The character of Holcroft, at this time, also underwent some change. The enduring patience with which he had suffered so much, and the untired perseverance by which so many obstacles were overcome, were relaxed in their energy, and he entered into a speculative copartnership with his old manager Booth, the object of which was the multiplication of pictures by the polygraphic art, but it ended in nothing.

It is not to be disguised, that although the talents of Holcroft were of no ordinary description, and that few men could lay an equally valid claim to the originality of being self-taught, he was yet not a genius of a very high order, and that perhaps his merits would have been less remarkable had his education been better: he had also

about him undoubtedly quite as much pretension as talent, and this very absurd speculation with the poly-graphic pictures was a striking example. In no part of his history does it appear that he had previously the slightest taste for painting, and yet in his thirty-sixth year he undertakes, on his own judgment, to supply the world with the most refined specimens of the art, and by an old mechanical contrivance, which his ignorance made him believe was new. His mind also, at this dawning of a brighter day, teemed with dramatic plots, characters, and incidents, and was full of the ambition to write elegant comedy, as if fate had not, both in natural taste and habit, denied the possibility.

Without question, his moral tact, though acute, was not delicate; the forms and colours which make elegance he had not the faculty to be able to discover. He could see perhaps farther into the depths of the bosom than many men, but of those faint and delicate distinctions which belong to that quality of character he had no adequate perception. His sight was better than common, but he had not the painter's eye. His way of life was also still more unfavourable to the cultivation of that power of discrimination between inborn and artificial manners, in which the true talent for elegant description lies. He had not opportunities to discover the difference between conventional elegance and natural endowment. He could, undoubtedly, delineate the outline of characters with considerable force, but there is no trace in all his manifold writings that he could very easily perceive the difference between the original mintage, and the polish produced by the collision of the other coins with which it circulated. But there was still a great deal of the most laudable emulation in his bosom, and a

purity of domestic affection, that may be often equalled, but is seldom excelled. His attempt to obtain a secretaryship with the Ambassador to Paris, is characteristic of his inflated pretensions; but the beauty of his constant love and regard for his father proves the simplicity of his heart, and would redeem greater blemishes.

Nor ought it to be passed over unnoticed, as a contrast to the principles which were developed in his life, that about this period he courted the condescension of the great with no particular dignity, nor seemed to be aware how little, either by mien or temper, he was likely to find favour in their eyes. Perhaps it was partly owing to his want of success in this humiliating pursuit that he afterwards became so acrid in democracy. The following sketch, which relates to the celebrated Duchess of Devonshire, affords a sample of the bitterness to which his fawning subjected his ill-directed ambition.

“An actress who, strange to tell, happened very deservedly to be popular, and whom, before she arrived at the dignity of a London theatre, I had known in the country, recommended me to a Duchess. To this Duchess I went day after day, and day after day was subjected for hours to the prying, unmannered insolence of her countless lacqueys. This time she was not stirring, though it was two o’clock in the afternoon; the next she was engaged with an Italian vender of artificial flowers; the day after the prince, and the devil does not know who beside, were with her; and so on, till patience and spleen were at daggers drawn. At last, from the hall I was introduced to the drawing-room, where I was half amazed to find myself. Could it be real? Should I after all see a creature so elevated; so unlike the poor compendium of flesh and blood with which I crawled

upon the earth? Why, it was to be hoped that I should. Still she did not come; and I stood gazing at the objects around me, longer, perhaps, than I can now well guess. The carpet was so rich that I was afraid my shoes would disgrace it; the chairs were so superb that I should insult them by sitting down; the sofas swelled in such luxurious state, that for an author to breathe upon them would be contamination! I made the daring experiment of pressing with a single finger upon the proud cushion, and the moment the pressure was removed it rose again with elastic arrogance; an apt prototype of the dignity it was meant to sustain. Though alone, I blushed at my own littleness. Two or three times the familiars of the mansion skipped and glided by me; in at this door and out at that; seeing yet not noticing me. It was well they did not; I should have shrunk with dread of being mistaken for a thief, that had gained a furtive entrance, to load himself with some parcel of magnificence that to poverty appeared so tempting! This time, however, I was not wholly disappointed: I had a sight of the Duchess, or rather a glimpse! Her carriage was waiting. She had been so infinitely delayed by my Lord and my Lady, and his Highness and Signora!—was exceedingly sorry!" &c.

Could the mind which conceived this envious and grudging passage, have any just pretension to imagine that it ever could attain honour by attempting to describe that mingled gaiety, courtesy, and sensibility, which constitute the essential ingredients of elegant comedy? But to return.

Not succeeding in his hopes with the ambassador, Holcroft being still determined to visit the Continent, procured an engagement with *The Morning Herald*, to

send over paragraphs, and with a bookseller, to furnish literary notices from Paris, an engagement far more suitable to his talents, acquirements, and condition. This mission he executed with ability and intelligence, but his evil fortune again lowered, and he was in consequence obliged to return to England, owing to the irregularity of the bookseller in making his remittances.

In 1784, his opera of *The Noble Peasant* was performed for the first time, and gave rise to a little interesting incident.

The evening it was acted, Holcroft had placed himself behind the scenes, to watch the progress, and at the end of the first act the effect on the audience was discouraging, and disapprobation began to manifest itself so strongly, that he could no longer stand it. He left the theatre dejected, and went to St. James's Park, where he walked for an hour. Having become more composed, he then returned, and was agreeably surprised to hear the house resounding with applause. The piece was not, however, very successful; it ran on eleven nights.

His next opera, *The Cholerick Fathers*, was brought out at Covent Garden, but it was not esteemed equal in merit to the last.

Besides his dramatic efforts, Holcroft employed his pen in other departments of literature, and was concerned in *The Wit's Magazine*; but about this time he declined his share, and resolved to devote himself to works of greater importance.

In 1784, *The Marriage of Figaro* came out at Paris with great success, so much so, that Holcroft resolved to go over to procure a copy, and adapt it to the English stage. The comedy had not been printed, and the jea-

lousy of the French managers would not supply the manuscript; in consequence Holcroft resolved to commit it to memory, and with a friend went every night for a week or ten days to the theatre, till they brought away the whole with perfect exactness—at night, when they got home, each of them wrote down as much as he could recollect, they then compared notes, and where they differed was corrected the following evening. When a copy was thus surreptitiously obtained, Holcroft hastened back to England, where arrangements were made with Harris for its speedy representation at Covent Garden. In a short time it was produced there, under the title of *The Follies of a Day*, and is still one of our popular entertainments. By this piece he received six hundred pounds from the theatre, besides disposing of the copyright.

In 1787 his comedy of *Seduction* was performed, and was received with great applause, and in 1789 he published his translation of *The King of Prussia's Works*, and also the translation of *Lavater's Essays*. For the former he received 1200*l*.

Perhaps to having been engaged with the works of the Royal author, whom he did not much esteem, as well as the revolutionary spirit that was then rising on the age, his political bias should be attributed. There is no doubt, that in the heart of the man himself a latent discontent—the spur of his ambition, lurked; and these circumstances, probably, only served to sharpen it.

In 1790, *The German Hotel* appeared at Covent Garden, a lively piece, and sometimes interesting, but little more than a translation. In 1791 he brought out the comedy of *The School for Arrogance*, which, as a literary work, is the best of all Holcroft's dramas. The subject was con-

genial to his temperament ; but the best scenes are overcharged and vulgar, and the refinement attempted in the character of the Count exhibits more of feminine petulance than the delicacy of a gentleman. His next play was *The Road to Ruin*, an extravagance put together with much skill and acumen ; but it largely partakes of the inherent fault of all Holcroft's dramatic compositions. The characters are caricatures, and the manners unlike those of the world. But still, as an acting drama, it was one of the most popular ever performed, and brought the author nine hundred pounds from the theatre, and three or four hundred for the copyright. It seems, however, to have been indebted for this success more to a fashion, than to the merits of the dialogue, and to the skill exhibited in the performance of one character, Goldfinch, for it is now almost laid aside.

The reputation and the circumstances of Holcroft were now thriving ; the calamities of want and misery, which darkened his younger years, had now relented their persecution ; but still he was an unfortunate man. In this year he lost his third wife, and in the preceding his eldest son, a clever and ingenious boy, but of a rambling disposition, who, on being intercepted in an attempt to sail for the West Indies, put a period to his existence. The circumstances of this catastrophe were truly deplorable, for it was in the very moment when the father was searching for him in the vessel on board of which he had taken his passage, that the deed was done.

In 1792 he published *Anna St. Ives*, a novel in seven volumes, which attracted considerable attention ; but it is not greatly remarkable for originality, though some of the sentiments and notions savour strongly of the political dogmas which he now began to teach. I believe,

however, that he was not aware of the danger he was doing to society, by undermining the reverence that is due to what age and custom has established. He was himself only a speculative politician, and would have spurned with horror the practice to which his precepts were calculated to lead. He was, in fact, one of those philanthropists who imagine that natural rights can be retained in the social state, and who think men should be regulated on a principle of equality; although Nature, by the variety of their endowments, whether of body or capacity, has so incontrovertibly pronounced them all different.

The first part of *Hugh Trevor*, another novel, appeared in 1794, and the remainder in 1797. It is something like a sequel to the former, but written with more common sense, and the style, which is throughout vigorous, sometimes rises to beauty; but it strongly partakes of that invidious feeling which I have noticed, both as inherent to himself, and engendered by the circumstances of his early life. It is, nevertheless, an amusing work; but the author does not indulge himself in good-humoured views of character. Vices that infest our common nature are too unjustly ascribed to rank; a Lord and a Bishop are the objects of his satire, and the faults of these individuals are displayed as the vices of their quality.

Hitherto the biography of Holcroft has afforded one of the most striking descriptions in literature—of talent combating fortune; and it is impossible to withhold sympathy, or repress admiration, at his struggles, and his courage, and his victories; but I doubt if the same compassionate interest can be expected for his subsequent career. He stepped aside from the sober path by which

he had gained so much distinction, and, infected with the mania of the time, he deemed himself qualified to exalt the condition of humanity.

In November 1792 he became a member of the Society for Constitutional Information : but it is said he did not approve of all their proceedings ; and he justly objected to the absurdity of their endeavours to decide what is true, by votes instead of reason ; as if truth could be determined like practical questions which have undertakings for their object.

The heady current of affairs in France had alarmed the British Government, especially when they were so easily traced to doctrines that also agitated the public mind in this country ; coercive measures to repress the evil were in consequence determined upon. The society to which Holcroft belonged became an object of jealousy and persecution ; and being in a great measure merely speculative, its meetings were deserted. Yet a few members of resolute courage, conscious that there was no treason in their topics, still adhered, and among others, Holcroft. The panic has long since evaporated which seized the Government, and was exasperated by Reeves' Association ; but it is matter of history that those adherents were marked out as delinquents ; some of them were arrested for high treason, and ordered to be tried. Among this number, besides the arrested, Holcroft was included in the bill of indictment. Rumours of the intention of Government to proceed against him were circulated some days before, and occasioned him much disturbance of mind ; but as he had not been committed, he was beginning to disregard these reports, when he received the intelligence of being indicted. His friends advised him to fly, but he chose a manlier part, and

determined on surrendering himself, which he did next day; and as soon as the business of the court would permit, he thus addressed himself to the Lord Chief Justice.

“ My Lord—being informed that a bill for high treason has been preferred against me, Thomas Holcroft, by his Majesty’s Attorney General, and returned a true bill by a grand jury of these realms, I come to surrender myself to this court and my country, to be put upon my trial, that, if I am a guilty man, the whole extent of my guilt may become notorious; and if innocent, the rectitude of my principles and conduct may be no less public. And I hope, my Lord, there is no appearance of vaunting, in assuring your Lordship, this court, and my country, that after the misfortune of having been suspected as an enemy to the peace and happiness of mankind, there is nothing on earth, after which, as an individual, I more ardently aspire, than a full, fair, and public examination. I have farther to request, that your Lordship will inform me, if it be not the practice in these cases to assign counsel, and to suffer the accused to speak in his own defence? Likewise, whether free egress and regress be not allowed to such persons, books, and papers, as the accused or his counsel shall deem necessary for justification.”

Some conversation arose in the court as to his identity, which terminated in the Solicitor-General moving his committal; he was accordingly taken into custody and sent to Newgate prison. In the course of a few days the solicitor for the Treasury, and two clerks, came to the prison and presented him with a copy of the indictment and a list of witnesses, together with a list of the jury, informing him, at the same time, that the Crown

would grant as many subpœnas, free of expense, as he should think proper to demand. The trials began on the following week, and the account which Holcroft himself has given is at once ridiculous, but so highly characteristic of his self-importance, that, merely as a trait of vanity, it well merits to be quoted.

“ Perhaps this country never witnessed a moment more portentous. The hearts and countenances of men seemed pregnant with doubt and terror. They waited in something like a stupor of amazement for the fearful sentence on which their deliverance or their destruction seemed to depend. Never, surely, was the public mind more profoundly agitated. The whole power of Government was directed against Thomas Hardy;* in his fate seemed involved the fate of the nation, and the verdict of Not Guilty seemed to burst its bonds, and to have released it from inconceivable misery and ages of impending slavery. The acclamations of the Old Bailey reverberated from the farthest shores of Scotland, and a whole people felt the enthusiastic transports of recovered freedom.”

This theatric inflation sufficiently proves the general deficiency of common sense by which those innocent traitors were animated; but Holcroft was punished for indulging in the dreams by which this was preceded, for, after having prepared his defence, which he expected would go down to all posterity as something wonderful, certainly equal to Paul's before Agrippa, he was not allowed to be heard. And it would be unfair not to notice a striking instance of the style in which he magnified himself on this occasion. The gentlemen who were

* One of the alleged conspirators, a shoemaker.

placed at the bar with him, on being acquitted, bowed and retired, but Holcroft was determined to make a speech, and the Chief Justice was so indulgent as almost to consent to hear him; he, however, claimed half-an-hour, and, in consequence, was ordered to withdraw.

There can be no doubt that Government, in this proceeding, was actuated by an excitement produced by misrepresentation, and that Holcroft, so far from encouraging any scheme of violence, did all in his small political capacity to direct the minds of the Constitutional Society to cultivate their intellects, which were certainly in a state of Nature. This was the head and front of his offending, and no more.

The persecution elevated him in his own opinion into mighty consequence, and, instead of showing himself possessed of the good taste which should have belonged to his innocence, he was instigated, by a vulgar effrontery, to brave and defy the malice and the ignorance of his adversaries. In this he forgot that he had assumed the character of a philosopher, and took unwise pains to prove how much his skinless mind unfitted him to submit with the resignation of a martyr, and to act with the resolution of a patriot.

These political turmoils being over, Holcroft resumed his literary labours, in which alone, as a public man, he was respectable. *Love's Frailties* came out in the spring of 1794, at Covent Garden, and met with a cool reception, in consequence of being too highly seasoned with political allusions. In 1795, 1796, 1797, and 1798, he successively brought out different dramas, all partaking of his general merit, but *The Deserted Daughter* was received with the greatest applause. As I do not, however,

undertake to criticise each of his works, it is unnecessary to be particular in recording their mere names. As contrivances, arranged with skill, his plots are often ingenious; and as congregated feelings, his characters have great merit, but they look not like things of flesh and blood. They have, it is true, individuality distinctly impressed upon them, too distinctly, but without those shades and delicate tints that mark the beings of life: they lack in personal features.

In 1799, Holcroft left England for Hamburgh, but, before his departure, he married his fourth wife, and, it is said, the marriage was affectionate and happy. In private life he was, indeed, exemplary, and it was only in the distinction to which he was raised by political persecution that his conduct was not uniformly discreet; self-estimation, probably, entered a little too largely into his transactions with others, but it was a blemish that chiefly affected himself and his own interests.

During the two last years he spent in England, before going abroad, he kept a diary, in which his own account of all his transactions are carefully recorded, and some of them with acumen; but it shows that his mind was now deeply ingrained with politics, and that, while he conceived himself growing a greater public man, he was daily becoming less a wise one. But there are occasional touches and anecdotes of a better kind. One relating to a dispute between Burke and Sir Joshua Reynolds is curious, as connected with a celebrated work of art.

“Burke endeavoured to persuade Sir Joshua Reynolds to alter his picture of the Dying Cardinal, by taking away the Devil, which Burke said was an absurd and ridiculous incident, and a disgrace to the artist. Sir

Joshua replied, "That if Mr. Burke thought proper, he could argue as well *per contra*;" and Burke asked, "If he supposed him so unprincipled as to speak from any thing but conviction?" "No," said Sir Joshua, "but had you happened to take the other side, you could have spoken with equal force." Burke again urged him to obliterate this blemish; Sir Joshua had heard his arguments, and desired to know if he could answer them, replied, "It was a thought he had conceived and executed to the satisfaction of himself and many others, and, having placed the Devil there, there he should remain."

I have had occasion to notice already that Holcroft, at one time, was very assiduous in propitiating the favour of the great, and, not being successful, he evidently became morose against them, and the system of things which upheld them. In his diary there is a curious confession of his weakness.

"I saw I was observed by General F——; we know each other personally, but are not acquainted; acquaintance, indeed, among persons of rank, I have very few. My feelings will not suffer me to be forward; and such persons are known only to the obtruding, or those who minister to their immediate pleasures and vices. Men of literature lay claim to honours to which men of rank have but seldom any good pretensions, and both seem jealous of their individual prerogatives."

In the diary there are some little curious biographical anecdotes, and the following, respecting a very celebrated person, is particularly characteristic.

"Horne Tooke takes some pleasure in praising his daughters (they went under the name of the Misses

Harts,) which he sometimes does by those equivocal falsehoods which are one of his principal pleasures. Of the eldest, he says, ‘All the beer brewed in this house is of that young lady’s brewing.’ It would be equally true were he to say all the hogs killed in this house are of that young lady’s killing, for they brew no beer. When a member of the Constitutional Society, I have frequently heard him utter sentences, the first part of which would have subjected him to death by the law but for the salvo that followed; and the more violent they were thus contrasted and equivocal, the greater was his delight.”

Upon the whole, the gossip in his Diary is not particularly interesting, it is that of any common town man, but the reader who looks at it will be amused with what special attention he mentions every man of rank he met with, and scarcely one of his own station. Yet, notwithstanding this weakness, it certainly reflects credit both on his attainments and general behaviour that a person who began life in his circumstances, should, by the force only of natural talent, have raised himself unpatronised to such respectability.

Soon after his arrival at Hamburgh, he attempted to set up a literary journal, but it only reached the second number. Such an undertaking was beyond his powers, and, whatever patronage the design might have met with, it was not likely to succeed by its own merits.

During his residence in Hamburgh he resolved to abandon, and did so for some time, his picture-dealing; but he was tempted to renew the speculation, and, of course, lost money, and yet he believed himself no incompetent judge of the merits of paintings.

While in that city, he met with an alarming accident. He had been recommended to bathe his feet in hot water, and mix a certain quantity of aqua fortis in the bath; as he was pouring the medicine, the steam of the water caused the bottle to burst. The aqua fortis flew up to his face and burned his wrists severely, but his spectacles preserved his sight; he was, however, some time recovering from the effects, but he bore his sufferings, as indeed all his misfortunes, with equanimity.

Having stayed upwards of a year at Hamburgh, he proceeded to Paris, where he remained above two years, employed in collecting materials for his work on the Manners of the French Capital, published on his return in 1804: a most interesting and amusing book, but it is no longer referred to.

On his return from the Continent he embarked with a brother of his wife in the establishment of a printing-office; it proved, however, unsuccessful, and he had, about the same period, the mortification to incur the damnation of his drama of *The Vindictive Man*. At the same time his health, which had long been infirm, began to fail, and, on the 23rd of March 1809, at the age of sixty-three, he died. During the last six weeks of his illness he suffered much, but throughout he sustained himself with that vigour of resolution which he often exerted with so much fortitude in the calamities and trials of his early life.

His biographer has injudiciously applied to him the epithet of great; undoubtedly, however, he was an able man in a department of literature, the drama, at once the most splendid and the most difficult. But, though meritorious and sometimes brilliantly successful,

he is far short of the first rank. Still, such was the native energy by which he was actuated, that it prompted him often to undertakings to which his abilities and knowledge were not equal. He has, however, built for himself an eminent monument in the literature of his country; insomuch that it will be rare to find, among the celebrated authors of England, a man who had to surmount so many obstacles, and in all acquitted himself so well.

GEORGE FREDERICK COOKE.

THIS great performer, for the vigour, the nature, and the austerity of his manner and talents, may be justly called the Tacitus of the stage. In his action there was, comparatively to his energy, but little grace; his strength consisted in a peculiar straight-forwardness—a strong Tuscan ability, which enabled him to sustain the greatest parts, and in which vastness of power was the predominant quality. He was born in Westminster, on Saturday the 17th of April 1756. His father was a captain in the 4th Dragoons, and died while a young man, leaving his widow in straitened circumstances. Her name was Benton. Soon after the death of her husband, she went to reside at Berwick-upon-Tweed, where her son was put to school. What progress he made in learning has not been carefully recorded, but he was generally, among the players, regarded as a man who had been well educated, which, however, cannot be received, considering their common deficiency, as demonstrative of any superior acquirement.

The first play he ever read was *Venice Preserved*, and from a portrait of Woodward, as Mercutio, and the representation of a puppet-show, he formed his earliest crude and nebulous idea of a theatrical stage. The first drama he saw acted was *The Provoked Husband*, by the Edinburgh comedians, in the Town-hall of the borough.

James Aicken, of the Theatre Royal Drury Lane, was the Lord Townley of the evening ; his memoir does not, however, preserve the name of the Lady Townley, but all was wonderful and elegant, and made an indelible impression.

At this period, his mother was dead, and he lived with her sisters ; and as playbooks made no part of their library, he borrowed them from every quarter, and his attachment to the histrionic profession,

“ Grew with his growth, and strengthen'd with his strength.”

In April 1769, another detachment of the Edinburgh company shed life and glory in the Town-hall — and the school-boys imitated their heroics, by forming a company, of which Cooke was a member. Their theatre was a barn ; their stage the floor ; their scenery mats and coloured paper, and their wardrobe a beggarly combination of borrowed garbs and discarded finery. Female characters were entirely omitted, except when *Hamlet* was brought out. On that occasion, the Queen was retained, and performed by a boy. Our hero's first appearance among them was as Young Meadows, in the opera of *Love in a Village*, in which he sang two of the songs ; but his chief part was Horatio in *Hamlet*, in which, though he was far from being esteemed at the head of the company, some of the Edinburgh players commended his exertions.

Boyish predilections are not, however, always to be regarded as indicative of talent, and although some of Cooke's juvenile adventures strongly marked the bias of his mind to the stage, and gave rise to laughable occurrences, it may be safely said, that the abilities he afterwards displayed were not decidedly apparent in his

youth, however strong and constant his inclination may have been.

During the time that the Edinburgh players were in Berwick, the school-boys were alert to escape the vigilance of the door-keepers. On one occasion, Cooke obtained a clandestine entrance, and when behind the scenes espied a barrel, which seemed to afford him a snug hiding-place. Into it he instantly leaped for concealment, and discovered in the bottom two twenty-four pound cannon-balls, but not yet being initiated into the mysteries of the theatre, he wondered what the balls were doing there, little suspecting that they assisted in making thunder, as well as Cyclops, or cannon. The play was *Macbeth*, and to give due effect to the entrance of the witches, the thunder was wanted for the first scene. The property-man approached and seized the cask, to cover the open end of which he fastened a piece of old carpet. Our hero remained crouched and silent, but the machine was lifted carefully by the property-man, and carried to the side-scene lest the thunder should roll before its cue, swearing, however, that the cannon-balls were cursedly heavy. The witches entered amidst lightning of rosin—the thunder bell rang, our hero sweated—the barrel received its impetus, and his iron companions rolled and rattled. It entered on the stage, and Cooke bursting off the carpet-head of the barrel, appeared before the audience with his head out, just as the witches agreed to meet again,

“ When the hurly-burly’s done.”

It was about the time when this affair took place, that our hero was bound as an apprentice to a printer, but this measure, conceived in kindness, and intended to

moderate his excess of passion, only made him more impassioned in his love of the stage, and to infect his associates. In fact, the mania had deeply touched all his fellow shopmen, and nothing would serve them but a secret exhibition, to the annoyance and just displeasure of their master.

Early in the year 1770, a band of strollers came to Berwick. They converted an old malt-house into a theatre, and opened their elegant performances with *The Provoked Husband*. At this place, Cooke saw *The Earl of Essex*, *Oroonoko*, and several other pieces. In the autumn of the same year, some of the young men of the town associated to perform the tragedy of *Cato*. *Lucius* was enacted by Cooke, and was happily achieved on the 5th of November 1770.

Whether our hero had improved, or his master considered his cure to sobriety hopeless, certain it is that George Frederick did not long remain with the printers; his indentures were cancelled in 1771, and he immediately set off for London. In the month of November following he went to Holland, but for what purpose is not recorded; and in the year after he returned to Berwick, still more, if possible, addicted to the reading of plays.

In 1773, another strolling company came to Berwick, and Cooke learnt from them sundry lessons, no doubt brave ones, of *Lear*, *Richard*, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, &c.; and again in the year following, he went to London, where he witnessed with enthusiastic delight, the greatest masters of that time of the sock and buskin. He saw Sam Foote, of celebrity in his way—the most impudent of mankind, and though renowned upon the town, a person of little reputation among the judicious.

The winter campaign at Covent Garden was opened with Murphy's tragedy of *The Grecian Daughter*, a piece of rant which Mrs. Siddons dignified. During this season Cooke first saw Garrick. His character was Leon, in Beaumont and Fletcher's comedy of *Rule a Wife, and have a Wife*. It is of some importance to notice, that soon after this period Cooke saw Macklin perform both Sir Archy Macsarcasm and Shylock, and probably derived from the performance, hints for that admirable truth with which he afterwards represented those parts himself.

He, however, did not make his regular debüt until the spring of 1776, and not then in Loudon, but in the sober town of Brentford, where, in the character of Dumont, in the tragedy of *Jane Shore*, he first came forth "to fret and strut his hour upon the stage." "We dressed," says he, "in one room; it was at the audience-end of the house, and we had to pass through the pit to reach the stage, which was no higher than the floor, for the theatre was only a large room in a public-house." What success he gained on this occasion is not mentioned, but on the following night, as Ensign Dudley in *The West Indian*, his applause was wonderful for Brentford.

In the summer of 1777, having now attained the legal age of manhood, and fairly adopted his profession, he visited Edinburgh and Berwick, and thence, being freed from restraint, he made a rapid transit to Hastings, in the south of England. From thence, having tired both natives and strangers, the players went off in a body to Rye, and enacted in that distinguished town, all sorts of dramas in an old school-house. In the spring of 1778, he made his first appearance as an actor in London, but he then attracted no admiration.

Between the time of his first acting in London and the autumn of 1779, Cooke played in various characters at the Haymarket theatre, and at that time ran the customary round of Thespian itinerancy, a growing favourite. It has been said, that it was during this time he acquired those habits as a man, which afterwards maimed his skill and ability as an actor.

In September 1779, he became a member of a strolling company at Sudbury in Suffolk, but from that period he is lost sight of, and from 1781 to 1783 his life affords no adventures worth recording but the dull routine of alternate starvation and fun, the essentials of a stroller's biography. During this interval he was, however, occasionally in the metropolis, and had several opportunities of studying Henderson, after which he made an engagement with the company at Manchester, which he ever considered an important epoch in his life, but the wherefore is not very obvious. He, however, made his first appearance there on the 2nd of January 1784, as Philotas, in *The Grecian Daughter*, and was received with much applause: the part, however, is not calculated to make a deep impression; indeed, the whole play is feeble, and affords no character adequate to elicit fire such as that of Cooke.

About the beginning of June the Manchester theatre was closed, and in the middle of the month our hero went to Lancaster, where he formed an engagement for the summer. From Lancaster the company went to Preston, where he made an engagement for Liverpool and Manchester, and in September he played for the first time in Liverpool; the part was Frankly, in *The Suspicious Husband*. In December the company removed to Manchester, and on the 5th of February he left his

situation for three months, on account of Moss, to whom the part of Sir Peter Teazle, which Cooke had played at Liverpool with *éclat*, was, he thought, improperly given.

It is necessary, perhaps, to observe here, that although our hero describes Moss as "a doubtful actor," it is extremely probable that in this part he was superior. I knew him well myself, and, in caricature parts, I have not yet, with the exception of Liston, seen his equal. From being a general player, and in all parts rather above mediocrity, his true particular merits were never justly appreciated: he was properly a farce actor, and in the grotesque characters of O'Keeffe his ability was irresistibly laughable. In Sir Peter Teazle he, perhaps, a little overstepped the modesty of Nature, but it was on the right side. His Lingo was a master-piece; no player, for the last six-and-twenty years on the London stage, could surpass it.

In June following Cooke again returned to Lancaster, and was esteemed at the time a rising man in his profession; his salary was, however, only two guineas a week, but it was the highest in that company. At this period he had a given time for study, not unusually long; he was, however, occasionally afflicted with those fits of inebriety which accompanied him through life, and so often seduced him from his duty.

On the 29th of July 1786, he made his first appearance at York as Count Baldwin, in *Isabella*; and the same night was rendered remarkable by Mrs. Siddons performing there after her great success in London. From York the company went with her to Hull. In September Cooke was engaged to act with Mrs. Siddons at Chester, a decisive proof that his merits were growing

with the public, for she was then in the morning of her glory, and the selection of him must have been made with reference to her splendour.

In January 1788 our hero acted for the first time at Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and in the character of Othello his merits were justly appreciated; at his benefit he came out as Richard the Third, with increasing reputation. He then returned to Manchester. It was soon after his arrival there that the scene took place which Riley has happily described in his "Itinerant," and which cannot be omitted here, it is so illustrative both of the actor and the man.

One evening they were in the bar of a public-house, amongst a promiscuous company, when, Cooke evidently yielding to his habitual failing, Riley became anxious to get him home while he was in good-humour. Perhaps, pressing a little too eagerly, he roused the lion, and Cooke exclaimed, eyeing him with scorn, "I see what you are about, you hypocritical scoundrel, you canting Methodistical thief! Am I, George Frederick Cooke, to be controlled by such a would-be Puritan as you? I'll teach you to dictate to a tragedian!" Then, pulling off his coat and holding up his fist, he exclaimed, in a menacing attitude, "Come out, thou prince of deceivers! though thou hast faith to remove mountains, thou shalt not remove me!—Come out, I say!"

There was a large fire in the grate, before which stood, with his skirts under each arm, a pitiful imitation of the kind of beaux then in fashion, deficient in cleanliness, shabby in costume, and, of course, insensible to propriety, and he wore a faded hat with a narrow brim, conceitedly placed on the side of his head. This filthy fop straddled, like the Colossus of Rhodes, before the

fire. At length he caught the eye of Cooke, who, in silent amazement, examined him from top to toe, and turning to Riley, burst into a loud laugh, and cried, "Beau Nasty!" and immediately rising and taking up the skirts of his coat, in imitation of the other, turned like him, too, his back to the fire, and then approaching, said, in an affected whisper, but loud enough to be heard,—

"Pray, Sir, how is soap?"

"Soap?"

"Yes, Sir, soap; I understand it is coming down."

"I'm glad of it, Sir."

"Indeed, Sir, you have cause, if one may judge from your appearance."

At this there was a general laugh: the stranger, however, affected not to observe it, but hitting his boots with a flourishing air rung the bell, and inquired if he could have "a weal kitlet, or a mutton chip."

"What do you think," said Cooke, "of a roasted puppy? because," taking up the poker, "I'll spit you and roast you in a minute."

The dirty beau retreated towards the door, and Cooke, following, cried out, in the attitude of Macbeth,—

"Avaunt, and quit my sight! thy face is dirty, and thy hands unwashed; avaunt, avaunt, I say!"—then, replacing the poker, he added, and returning to his seat, "Being gone, I am a man again."

It happened that a noted boxer made one of the company, a remarkably strong man, modest and good-natured. This scene had such an effect upon him that he burst into an immoderate fit of laughter, which drew the actor's attention, and turning with his bitterest look, Cooke addressed him in the most contemptuous manner.

The pugilist, knowing his peculiarities, bore his contemptuous epithets as long as possible, until they became so gross as to be no longer endurable, when calmly taking him in his arms, as though he had been a child, he set him down in the street, and bolted the door. Our hero entreated at the window, the night being wet, for admission, in vain; and being unheeded, he broke several panes, and inserting his head through the fracture said, "Gentlemen, I have taken some *pains* to gain admittance;—pray let me in, for I *see through* my error."

Scenes of this kind were common in the nights of our hero. Once at Glasgow, Rock, of Edinburgh, had occasion to make an apology for Cooke's being unable to act, and it was to a tragic tone, suiting the action to the word,—"Ladies and Gentlemen, Mr. Cooke, I am grieved to say, has been taken with a *bowl* complaint."*

At the Newcastle assizes, in 1789, Cooke performed with the celebrated Mrs. Jordan, and, in the same year, he also played with the famous Lord Ogleby, King, pursuing his profession with credit to himself, notwithstanding occasional interruptions arising from his unfortunate excesses.

In 1791 he was a member of a strolling company at Buxton, and afterwards he returned to Manchester, thence to Liverpool, where he found himself the brightest, though, in the opinion of the audience, the dimmest star in a London constellation. It was at this time he played Lear for his own benefit; but for the part, however judicious his conception, his physical powers were of too coarse a texture.

The year 1793 passed with him much in the same way as those immediately preceding. In July 1794 he

* *Bowl*—meaning punch-bowl.

was at Buxton, where he commenced a journal, in which he has noted the books he then read, and in which there is a character of Dr. Johnson, drawn with force and discrimination.

“Upon considering Dr. Johnson’s life,” says he, “which seems very accurately delineated by Boswell, I do not find the doctor that amiable, nor sometimes that respectable character I expected or wished. He is drawn overbearing, arrogant, extremely vain of his literary abilities, and forgetting all decorum when the company he happened to be in did not pay him that implicit attention and obedience he thought, even from men of equal or superior learning, he had a right to demand. Harsh and rude to women, and affecting to depreciate the literary merits of others, constituting himself sole judge of literary differences.”

This journal contains an account also of his transactions at Buxton, but it is not remarkable for any other quotable passage, except, it may be, one concerning America, in which he discriminates, with considerable fairness, the character of General Washington, as compared with the patriots of Paris at that time, and another which, remembering his own infirmity, cannot be perused without sympathy. “Drunkenness,” says he, “is the next leveller to death; with this difference, that the former is always attended with shame and reproach, while the latter, being the certain lot of mortality, produces sympathy, and may be attended with honour.”

Early in November 1794, he embarked at Holyhead for Dublin, and, from his arrival, he dates a new era in his life. He was then thirty-eight years of age, and was still only a provincial player, but he now took possession of the Dublin stage without a rival.

His first appearance was in the part of Othello. "The Dublin theatre was then," he says, "at a low ebb; the performers ill paid; and the house, scenes, and dresses, very mean and bad." But his unfortunate habit, more than the circumstances of the theatre, forced him to retire for a while from the stage, and to commit many pranks, which ultimately brought him to such a state of degradation that, either in shame or in drunkenness, he enlisted in a regiment destined for the West Indies.

One evil is generally the forerunner of another—sickness prevented him from embarking, and he was in England, 1796, as a soldier, dissatisfied with himself and his military profession. From this state he was relieved, on making his situation known to his old friends, the managers of the Manchester theatre, who procured his discharge, and subsequently engaged him; but, before he joined their party, his excesses involved him in many disgraceful troubles.

In the course of the same year, 1796, he married a Miss Daniels, of the Chester theatre, at the time he was professionally in that city.

After his marriage he went to Dublin, where he played Iago, which was ever after one of his greatest parts. Subsequent to the rebellion in 1798, Cooke again played in Dublin, and, I believe, it was under this engagement that he first performed there with Kemble. An anecdote of the two, when they acted together there, is so characteristic of both, that it ought to be studiously preserved in their biography.

Our hero was waiting at the side-scene for his cue to go on, when Kemble came up to him.

"Mr. Cooke," said he, "you distressed me exceedingly in my last scene; I could scarcely get on; you did

not give me the cue more than once ; you were very imperfect."

" Sir, I was perfect."

" Excuse me, Sir, you were not."

" By G—— I was, Sir."

" You were not, Sir."

" I'll tell you what, I'll not have your faults fathered upon me ; and d—n me, black Jack, if I don't make you tremble in your pumps one of these days, yet."

It is evident, from this little scene, that Cooke was conscious that he possessed the power to rival Kemble, and that he, even after having been so long on the boards of the provinces, was looking forward to an appearance in London. It was about this time that Mrs. Cooke left him.

From Dublin he went to Cork, and thence with the company to Limerick ; and, in December 1799, he was in Dublin, but his fame was, in the mean time, filling a larger space in the world. On the 14th of February 1800, he received a letter from Mr. Lewis of Covent Garden, telling him there would be an opening for him next year if he wished it ; and, in the June following, he entered into an engagement with Mr. Harris, the manager of that theatre ; and on Sunday, the 26th of October, near midnight, he reached the metropolis. On the 31st of the same month he came forth in the character of Richard the Third, and established his fame : " never," he has said himself, " was a reception more flattering, nor ever did I receive more encouraging, indulgent, and warm approbation than on that night, both through the play, and at the conclusion. Mr. Kemble did me the honour of making one of the audience."

He was, at this time, in the forty-fifth year of his age,

but he was still, notwithstanding his occasional excesses, in the full possession of all his faculties ; and it appears that he could only be regarded as having attained the full possession of them ; for they were slow in their developement ; and, notwithstanding his intense passion for the stage, it could not be justly said that he was much sooner refined for the taste of London.

His second character was Shylock ; his third Sir Archy Macsarcasm ; his fourth was Iago, in which, it has been thought by good judges, he had no competitor, but many also imagined that he showed his hypocrisy so openly that it was wonderful how Othello could have been deceived by him. After Iago he attempted Macbeth, but, though he was allowed to be great, it was not esteemed one of his happiest characters. I shall not follow him, however, in all his parts ; it is enough to say they were the principal in the dramas of the time, in each of which he was never wanting in power, and often produced the most stupendous effects, both as to nature and skill. On the 27th January 1801, he took his first benefit, and, with a liberality not often imitated since, and always rare, it was given thus early and free of expense, in consideration of the impression which his performance had made on the town.

Cooke was now at the top of his profession ; he could hope to ascend no higher ; and for a time his career was similar to that of the most distinguished performers. The great towns in which he had formerly performed, not indeed unheeded, became eager to see him, as if the appearance on the London stage had added some new faculty, or was aught more than a test. But in this respect he had nothing to complain. It is the way of the world ; for although the talents of an author or artist

receive no addition from success, yet success itself often depends on accident. A man, who is of weight in his circle, will often accomplish more for a candidate for fame than all the candidate's own endeavours, and sometimes even where he has less merit than in those things which have been neglected. Such is the spell of power, that waits upon patronage, and leads public opinion; the deficiency will be overlooked, and only the amiable and beautiful become the subjects of descant.

What added, perhaps, to the happiness of our hero at this time, when, "with all his blushing honours thick upon him," he returned to his country acquaintance, after his triumphant ovation on the London stage, was the dissolution of his marriage with Miss Daniels. There was something never very clearly explicable in his connection with that lady. Their marriage may have been like that of the beggars, which was for a six weeks; certain, however, it is, that it was duly put an end to, not by death, but by the Right Honourable Sir William Scott, as announced in the public prints of the time, viz. "On the fourth of July instant, a cause respecting the validity of the marriage of Mr. George Cooke, of the Theatre Royal Covent Garden, and Miss Alicia Daniels, of the Theatre Royal Bath, came on to be heard in Doctors' Commons, before the Right Honourable Sir Wm. Scott, when the learned Judge pronounced the marriage null and void." It is, however, worthy of remark, that the playhouse of Bath is called a Theatre Royal, and that no reason is assigned for the dissolution: Cooke himself was not a man likely to have put into the newspapers a sentence of this kind, and we know nothing of the lady, and as little of her kin.

It would be to repeat a subject which has been already exhausted, to tell how he was received in the country after his metropolitan test. Before, he was considered an able performer; he had now, at least, in some points, no rival, and Edinburgh, with its usual loquacity, was garrulous of applause. His American biographer speaks of the Scotch critics as the best judges of the dialect he made use of in Sir Archy and Sir Pertinax; he meant accent, for Macklin's Scotch is worse than detestable—it is odious.

From Edinburgh, Cooke went to the muslin-manufacturing city of Glasgow, of which his praise is sweet and precious; "Where," says he, "I finished my number of nights, and quitted Scotland, very sensible of the favours with which I had been received:"—a memorandum which gives us good reason to think that it was on this occasion he suffered, as we have already said, from the *bowl* complaint—(the punch-bowl).

It is but justice to Manchester to say, that he was received as one coming there with "brows bound with victorious wreaths." It had ever been a place in which he had been received with kindness. He liked the inhabitants for their hospitality. Though he clambered the steep of fortune elsewhere with hard labour and with difficulty, there he was always regarded with distinction, and before his talents had received the mintage of London, the value of the bullion was justly appreciated.

From Manchester he went to Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and played or drank there more than he should have done, for he did not appear in London in time, and a month of his life is unaccounted for.

After his appearance, and acting some of his greatest parts, he was brought out in 1802 in Orsino in *Alfonso*, in

which his admirers were divided : some of them thought, that by bringing him in a new part and a new play, his attractions were failing ; but if we consider managers as men, the affair admits of another explanation. His attractions may not have failed, but his novelty was wearing off among those who were not regular playgoers ; and it is probable, as tragedies are generally expensive treats, that the managers rested on the sterling influence of his ability to secure success.

On the 24th February, he had his second benefit in London, but the proceeds to himself, though it was also clear, were less than his first. It produced to him 409*l.* 13*s.* 6*d.* Subsequently he entered into an engagement with Mr. Harris, for three years, which, after the third year of his first article, was at a salary of fourteen guineas a-week.

The career and course of Cooke, making due allowance for his personal peculiarities, was little different from that of other eminent performers. He was now a decided favourite with the national, as well as the London public, and his endeavours were uniformly crowned with approbation ; although it must be confessed, that he received instances of popular punishment, in consequence of a neglect generally ascribed to his early and irrepressible inclination for the bottle.

It appears that he at various times kept his journal with considerable care ; but it contains little that is interesting to the general reader, however much it may have been to himself ; and the fact must not be disguised that though often a brilliant companion, he was often shunned ; his sobriety could not always be counted upon, and when he had taken too much wine, he was obstreperous, and could not be easily guided. On the stage he

was wonderful; in the parlour doubtful, and sometimes dangerous. His company was in consequence not much sought for, and on the stage alone it was allowed that he was most desirable.

On the 11th of May 1802, he first disappointed the London audience, by one of those unfortunate relapses of his early habit, now become inveterate, to which we have so often alluded. The play was *Alfonso*, in which he had undertaken the part of Orsino, and it was a benefit-night. He came upon the stage, attempted to perform, was hissed, and ultimately obliged to retire. The event was long obviously inevitable; for although from his first appearance, he had, under the influence of resolution, seconded by emulation, preserved the good opinion of the public, the devil was still in possession of the stronghold, and the only wonder was that Cooke had so long withstood the tempter.

On the 3rd of June he was in a condition to resume his professional exertions, but he had now passed the hill-top of his hopes and endeavours. He had no higher height to ascend—his descent was rapid, and on the other side, but marked rather by the adventures and follies of occasional convivial indulgence, than by those chances that constitute the better and more interesting part of biography. It is, however, from no lack of materials, that I in this manner, perhaps too slightly, regard my subject, for the circumstances of no actor's life have been so well preserved as those of Cooke's from his appearance on the London stage. To these remarks I regret to add a painful fact.

On the 20th of April 1803, Cooke took his benefit in London. There is, however, no reason to believe that it was like the other two, free, nor that the proceeds from

the public were so liberal even as the last—a proof that his estimation was fading.

In September he returned from his summer excursions and resumed his place at Covent Garden, where Kemble having become a proprietor, he found him there with his superb sister, Mrs. Siddons. It might have been supposed that the population of London would have crowded the house to see Shakspeare illustrated by the acting of such a trio, but it did not take place. It even was ordained for the boy Betty to eclipse all their influence and splendour for a season.

The first appearance of Kemble and Cooke on the stage together, was on the 3rd of October, when the latter played Gloucester to the Richmond of the former. They both employed their best energies, and were justly rewarded by the plaudits bestowed by the audience. But it must not be omitted that Kemble, in taking the inferior part, evinced, perhaps, as good a knowledge of the world as a consciousness of ability, for by so doing, he augmented the respect previously entertained for his character. Three days after, *Douglas* was performed, in which Kemble again took the subordinate part of Old Norval. Cooke was the Glenalvon of the night, and Mrs. Siddons the Lady Randolph. In this way the performances of the season were conducted. The habiliments were of the most gorgeous description, the scenery could not be surpassed, and the propriety of all the incidental decoration nearly perfect, but, notwithstanding, it was not a profitable season. Cooke's benefit for the spring of 1804 was so near a disappointment, that he never took another in London, and his career in private life was become low, offensive, and violent. On the stage he was several times hissed for incapable

intoxication, and Kemble, by his circumspect behaviour, augmented his superiority.

In the mean time, the whole host of the theatre were destined to receive a severe humiliation in the appearance of Master Betty, who was now gradually becoming the idol of the hour. It cannot be disputed that the boy was followed by the fashion more than in consequence of any just discrimination of his merits, and that, although it must be conceded to the mortified actors that he was not such a prodigy as his worshippers proclaimed him, he yet served to show the world that, although endowment sometimes raised the player's to an intellectual art, it was in truth but a tyro's study, and required in most cases but the vulgar preparation of mechanical discipline.

In 1805, Cooke was in all respects, both as a man and a player, as he had been in the preceding year, but his deplorable avidity was becoming stronger and stronger.

The year 1806 was such another as the last.

Cooke does not appear to have been re-engaged at the opening season for 1807. It was commonly supposed that he had gone abroad, but the improvident man had incurred debts, and was either in hiding or in prison. About the end of the year he was set at liberty at Appleby, and little more can be said of him, than that while in confinement there, he had kept a journal, if such it may be called, which consisted only of recollections and short notes on the books he then read. From Appleby prison he was liberated by Rock, connected with the theatres of Edinburgh and Glasgow, and made an engagement with him, under which he acted with regularity from December to July. In these professional engagements there is nothing interesting; they were each

like another. A player's life, when well conducted, affords as few incidents to biography as that of any ordinary man of business; adventure is seldom on the stretch, or eccentricity on the wing saved difficulty.

In 1808 Cooke married again, which is the only event affecting the fortunes of the man, which may have been said to have taken place in this year, not distinguished by any uncommon occurrence.

In 1809 a cabal, it cannot be called a conspiracy, undoubtedly existed against Cooke among the admirers of John Kemble. Undoubtedly that person was, in private life, both agreeable and respectable, but it cannot be disputed that he had something of the pedant about him, and that the approbation which awaited him on the stage, was not entirely a tribute to professional excellence. His unblemished honour as a gentleman did much for him, and although it was suspected that he lent his countenance to the detractions of Cooke, every one who knew him in private must have scouted the imputation as a calumny. Indeed, the malice of Cooke's enemies stood not in need of any such encouragement. The admirers of Kemble required nothing more than Cooke's own imprudence to justify their preference. But malignity goes always farther than for its own base purposes it need do; a mysterious corrective provided by Nature. That Cooke's love of wine impaired his powers, and that he allowed it to grow into an odious habit is true, but I believe it is a received doctrine, that the private conduct of a public person is not a fair subject of public criticism; certain it is, that Cooke had been once a man of genius, and his infatuation was rather a topic for commiseration than scorn. There are, however, always in the precincts of the playhouse and the booksellers' shop, a

race of human creatures who live by misrepresentation, and who cannot discern the distinction between misrepresentation and criticism; Cooke had unfortunately, by his infirmity, which in charity may have been said to have grown to disease, furnished that despicable tribe with the means to injure him with the world.

In this year Covent Garden theatre was rebuilt after its destruction by fire, was again opened with a flat prologue, recited by Kemble: and when what was called the O. P. war between the proprietors and the public was put an end to, the business went on as usual. On the errors of Cooke, as they originated in a habit that had now become a vice, it were disagreeable to enlarge. The unfortunate man was every day losing by his behaviour the regard of the London people; and the daily press, forgetful of its own power and dignity, made itself an agent in the unworthy business of holding him up to public contempt.

In the year 1810 and on the 5th of June, he played Falstaff in the First Part of Henry IV., and it was his last performance in London. Soon after, going to Liverpool, he fell in there with the manager of the New York theatre, with whom he entered into an engagement, and embarked for America on the 4th of October, 1810, On the 16th of November 1810, he arrived at New York, where, on the 21st of the same month, he made his first appearance as Richard III. on the American stage. A vast crowd assembled, great confusion ensued at the theatre, and, to do the inhabitants of that city justice, there was ample anxiety to see him. It is said, that previous to going that night on the stage, he was greatly agitated. He trembled like a novice, and the idea of appearing before a new people, and in a new world, at

his advanced life, occupied his whole mind, and filled him with apprehensions greater than he had experienced when he first acted in London.

This was no doubt the truth, for it could not be the effect of professional deference for the taste of the audience, an unjust detractive spirit existing among many Englishmen with respect to that point. Cooke had, in his own circumstances, obvious causes for dismay and emotion, and it may perhaps be said justly, that they overcame the national disrespect with which the audience is regarded. Though the New York audience may not be always judicious in their criticisms of the players from England, the players are still less so in their acting. In the desire to excel and be distinguished, they all overact, and, if the audience do not applaud exactly at the proper place, it is more owing to this cause than to the want of just feeling in the audience.

From New York, Cooke went to Boston, where he performed fourteen nights with his wonted success, but with some drawback on the favour of the public, arising from his truly calamitous habit. But I will hasten over these scenes of melancholy prostration. The details are, in themselves, disgusting; and, considering them as the vice and lapses of a man of genius, they are humiliating to human nature. His American biographer has been, as to his conduct, in my opinion, too minute, but the correctness of his narrative is considered unimpeachable.

The errors of the players, so full of extraordinary occurrences—such pictures at once of high and low human nature—of suffering and enjoyment, form, after all, a disheartening task. Among the incidents of Cooke's imprudence, adventures occur that both shock and injure, by being mingled with circumstances which should be as

seldom as possible disclosed. He had a warm and generous heart in the midst of all his grossness; and, in some instances, even in the basest intoxication, it shone forth with a beautiful radiance.

From New York, after his excursion to Boston, and a second engagement had been concluded, he went to Philadelphia. On the eve of his departure, however, he was taken ill, which detained him a short time, but, having recovered, he went forward, and, after several exhibitions, he again fell ill. It could no longer be disguised from himself, or his friends, that his constitution was breaking up; he lingered, however, with occasional lapses, for some time, performing now and then his favourite characters. His last appearance was in New York, as Richard III. on the 20th of March 1812, and the progress of decay continued with him till the 26th of September, of that year, when he breathed his last. On the following day, his remains were deposited in St. Paul's church-yard, in Broadway, New York, with all due respect, and with many testimonies of popular homage evinced by the multitude that attended his funeral.

It cannot be justly said that Cooke was a performer whose talents were in any degree neglected by the world, although it was late in life before he reached the London stage. He was naturally a man of strong sense, something of Quin's disposition, but he wanted the gentlemanly propriety of that great performer. He is still considered as having been an ornament to his profession, and is never spoken of without an epithet of admiration for his abilities, and a sigh for his incurable indiscretions. Biography affords few examples of a career more disagreeable than that of Cooke, arising almost entirely from the effects of his fatal indulgence, especially after

he went to America. Strange that a man, whose histrionic conceptions were more distinguished for good sense and forcible expression than that of any other performer, should have been, in private life, so addicted to wine as to render the word *odious* not too emphatic a phrase in the description of it.

MRS. BADDELEY.

" A kind of sleepy Venus seemed Dadù,
 Yet very fit to murder sleep in those
 Who gaz'd upon her cheek's transcendent hue,
 Her Attic forehead, and her Phidian nose ;
 Few angles were there in her form, 'tis true,
 Thinner she might have been and yet scarce lose ;
 Yet after all 'twould puzzle to say where
 It would not spoil some separate charm to pare.
 She was not violently lively, but
 Stole on your spirit like a May-day breaking,
 Her eyes were not too sparkling, yet, half shut,
 They put beholders in a tender taking ;
 She look'd (this simile's quite new,) just cut
 From marble, like Pygmalion's statue waking,
 The mortal and the marble still at strife,
 And timidly expanding into life."—BYRON.

SUCH was Mrs. Baddeley, who, if her mind had even
 in a remote degree possessed any grace comparable to
 those of her alluring person, would have ranked among
 the most celebrated women of ancient or of modern
 times. But the passion of her life was enjoyment, and,
 in all its stages, so unchecked by intellectual considera-
 tions, that it can only be fitly described by an austere pen.

Sophia Snow, her maiden name, was born in 1745, and
 was the daughter of the Serjeant-trumpeter to King
 George II. Her education was genteel, and she was

early distinguished for the melody of her voice, the soft delicacy of her beauty, and an indescribable sweetness of manner.

Her father saw in her vocal endowments a treasure deserving of the utmost care, and cultivated her taste for music with ardent assiduity, but his discipline was severe : perhaps, however, he may have been excited by her inattention, for she was of an easy, indolent, voluptuous nature, and delighted more to indulge in the love-tales of novels, than to study the tasks of his lessons.

His zeal in tuition, and her longing for more pleasureable pastime, led soon to the natural result. At eighteen she eloped with Baddeley, who then belonged to the Drury-Lane company, and soon after, in 1764, when she had become his wife, she made her first appearance on the stage as Cordelia, in *Lear*, and was received with the loudest applause.

Her debut was, however, rendered remarkable by an occurrence which affected the feelings of the audience more than her singular beauty. Never having seen the play, and being requested to read the part in the absence of an actress who was suddenly taken ill, when Edgar came upon the stage as mad Tom, his figure and manner gave her such a shock that she screamed in real terror and fainted. This unexpected incident roused the sympathy of all present, and when she recovered, and resumed the performance, she was encouraged to proceed with the most generous plaudits.

Her vocal powers were deemed of the highest order, and she was soon engaged as a singer at Vauxhall, and subsequently at Ranelagh, where her salary was twelve guineas a-week. Her forte at the theatre was genteel

comedy; but once, during the illness of Mrs. Barry, she performed the part of Mrs. Beverley in *The Gamester*, and acquitted herself with more than common ability.

At what time her career of shame began admits of no precise proof; but for the space of three years which she lived with her husband, there was no public impeachment of her character: she, appears, however, before her separation from Baddeley, to have received the visits of dissolute young noblemen, and there is cause to fear that long before she threw herself publicly away, her conduct had not been without some secret stain.

Soon after their separation, Mr. and Mrs. Baddeley continued to perform at the same theatre together, without speaking to each other, save in their respective parts: she then squandering character in gay profligacy, and he a calm auditor to the reports of her intrigues.

On one occasion, when their Majesties King George III. and Queen Charlotte, of punctilious memory, were present, Mrs. Baddeley played Fanny in *The Clandestine Marriage*, and her husband Canton. In the scene where the Swiss exhausts all his adulation to recommend her to Lord Ogleby, their relative situation caused a universal laugh, in which the King and Queen heartily joined. And she was next day honoured with a message from George the Third, desiring her to go to Zoffany, and have her picture taken in the attitude and situation in which she appeared when Fanny joins Canton and Lord Ogleby, and when the application for the man she loves is construed by his Lordship into an amorous solicitation himself.

The incident of her picture having been ordered by his Majesty, tended to make her more the fashion, and

the prodigality lavished upon her by her admirers, showed the extent to which beauty will seduce its votaries, when celebrity flavours the delicious cup.

Among her numberless suitors was a young nobleman, whose ardour was certainly somewhat of a peculiar taste, for he solicited an interview with her in Henry VII.'s Chapel. His love, however, was rejected, but he presented her with three hundred pounds for her friendship, and they made a moral tour of the Abbey together, and were vastly pleased with the wax-work. Subsequently, he became her prodigal protector.

Although the life of Mrs. Baddeley was not remarkable for kindly feelings, she was not incapable of attachments, and once when deserted in displeasure by one of her admirers, she swallowed poison, from which she was recovered with difficulty. It is true that she was then deeply in debt, the plagues of which, without the anguish of faithless love, have broken as tough a heart.

There is nothing more remarkable in all the biography of Mrs. Baddeley, than the influence she appears to have possessed among the great, even reaching to public patronage. The same moral laxity, in which it originated, may exist as powerfully in the present time; perhaps it would be considered affectation to doubt it; but unquestionably the age has improved in decorum; and if we are not more virtuous than our predecessors, more homage is now paid to public opinion. It does not however appear, that she made any sordid traffic of her patronage, but only occasionally employed it to soften the asperities of misfortune to her friends.

One part of her conduct was something akin to fatality; for although it may be justly said, that she was in the enjoyment of great affluence, yet, such was her con-

tempt for fortune, and the prodigality of her expenditure, that she was ever standing on the brink of want. The slightest indisposition would at any time, in her highest state, have hurled her to beggary. She never appears to have had any thought of to-morrow, for she scattered her money with the most imprudent profusion; bought dresses and jewels without measure, and bestowed them on her acquaintances so readily as to diminish the value of her reckless gifts.

On one occasion she was advised, for the determination could spring from no motive of her own, to apply to Garrick for an increase of salary; but he refused to comply with her request, and in consequence she resolved to quit the stage, and in disgust actually did so for a considerable time. At this period she was under the protection of her Abbey lover, who appears to have really felt uncommon attachment to her, mingled with vanity, for he supplied her caprice with the most extraordinary liberality.

Mrs. Baddeley was only celebrated for beauty and professional talent. She may have been intelligent in other respects, and possessed of conversational graces; but the fact does not appear; on the contrary, she seems to have been rather under the level of most women in understanding. Cunning, however, was deeply ingrained with apparent simplicity, and by it she deceived those who esteemed themselves greatest in her confidence.

Her conduct, when her mother was supposed to be dying, was as heartless as if it had been a tragedy spectacle of the theatre. She was at the bedside, all tears—a very Magdalen—and received the exhortations of her afflicted parent with many penitential promises; but as

Mrs. Snow did not immediately then die, she quitted the sick chamber, resumed her profligacy, and, with no symptom of contrition, proposed to her female friend that they should go to Paris to see the French amusements, and, if possible, to bring over new dresses. This turpitude was of a more offensive hue than either whim or thoughtlessness; for, notwithstanding the tears and pledges on her knees to her dying mother, the journey was to fulfil a promise she was under at the time to a favourite paramour.

He had, however, returned to England before she arrived at Paris; but nevertheless, as if infected with the volatile genius of the place, she set herself earnestly to enjoy its pleasures.

Immediately the most fashionable shoemaker was summoned, the sketch of whose appearance is an amusing picture of the Parisian manners of that period. He was dressed in the highest style of the mode, in a suit of black silk, with a cocked-hat under his arm, his hair superbly magnified with frizzle and powder, and his thigh sustaining a courtier's sword. This phenomenon, common to Paris in those days, was rendered complete, when, after performing his congees, he called in his servant, who attended with a silk bag of shapes and patterns, to display the glory of his art.

Another of her Parisian adventures had true comedy in it, and might be worked into an agreeable farce. After viewing the porcelain manufacture at Sevre, she stopped at the inn for dinner, at which two daughters of the landlady attended.

It was soon observed that one of them eyed the female companion of Mrs. Baddeley in a particular manner, in consequence of taking it into her head, that because she

was dressed in a riding-habit she was a gentleman in disguise. Mrs. Baddeley humoured her fancy, and said, "If not engaged, this friend of mine, who has dressed himself like a woman, is so much in love with you, that I don't know what will be the consequence."

The simple girl replied, that she had never before seen a man she could make choice of. The companion assured her that she was indeed a woman, but Mrs. Baddeley contradicted her; and when she retired to her chamber, the silly maiden, in the plainest terms, and with the utmost naïveté, declared how much she was dying with love; saying, that she might be little esteemed for declaring her passion, but she was unable to conceal it, and would follow her to the world's end. Mrs. Baddeley came into the room and insisted that the girl should be made happy; the landlady also came in, and approving the choice, told them that her daughter had a pretty fortune, and would make a good wife for any man; upon which the enamoured damsel threw her arms round the neck of her adored, and began to weep, and kiss, and fondle over her.

As Mrs. Baddeley found it would be necessary to stop for the night, to keep up the farce she ordered in her hearing two bed-rooms, and when her companion went to take possession of hers, she found the demoiselle secreted there: this brought on the denouement.

After having indulged herself with all the sights worth seeing within fifty miles of Paris, Mrs. Baddeley left that city on her return to London. In the course of the journey to Calais, as she travelled night and day, she and her friend were often a good deal intimidated by the innkeepers, who would have induced them to stay at their houses for the night; but in despite of all the frightful tales of

many robberies, they still hastened on. One night, however, they were pursued by two horsemen; they ordered their drivers to mend their pace,—the horsemen bellowed stop, stop!—the drivers hastened forward, their attendants seized their pistols, and the ladies took one each, determined on resistance. At last the horsemen reached them, as much alarmed as themselves, for they had been sent by the landlord of the inn where they had last stopped, to ask four shillings omitted in their bill.

Having crossed the Channel and reached Tunbridge in safety, after bribing the custom-house officers both at Calais and Dover, they were showing their Parisian finery to a milliner from London whom they met there; while in this delightful business, another harpy of the revenue pounced upon them, and not only seized their trunks, but rummaged the house of the milliner, and made much booty.

This adventure was only deplored by our heroine on account of her new dresses, for, in apprehension of being fined, she durst not apply for her clothes. Indeed, she possessed the true equanimity of her profession, and was seldom disturbed even when involved in danger. An accident that illustrates this deserves to be recorded.

She was, among other fancies of self-indulgence, very fond of cats, and had a favourite of this species called Cuddle, which she often took with her when she travelled. On a journey to Portsmouth, when this cat was with her, and her female companion also in the carriage, the post-boys overturned them, and dragged the coach in their carelessness some way before they could stop the horses, by which the door and the panels were broken on one side, and the whole cargo within tumbled out on the road; no bones were however broken, but Mrs. Bad-

deley, in the midst of the alarm and confusion, got up and cried aloud for Cuddle, declaring if he was hurt she would go distracted.

At this period she indulged in every luxury that her extravagance desired. On one occasion her Westminster Abbey friend made her a present of twenty diamond pins, which cost four hundred guineas. She always wore two watches with valuable trinkets; one of them was very costly, and the other, a little French watch, hung to a chain set with diamonds; she had also four necklaces of brilliants. She wore enamelled bracelets encircled with diamonds, and a diamond bow with rings out of number; she had a sideboard of plate, and silver candlesticks. Her house was elegantly furnished; the walls of the drawing-room were hung with silk curtains drawn up in festoons in imitation of Madame du Barrè's at Versailles, and every thing about her establishment was of the most splendid kind; she kept nine servants, and her liveries were suitable to her establishment.

From this high and palmy state of opulence and prodigality I have now to trace her fall. The first symptom was an ominous feeling which arose upon her, in a conversation with one of her admirers, while he was advising her to remember that beauty would not last for ever, and to provide for a rainy day.

"There is time enough for that," said she, "but for my part I will have my frolics and pleasures, convinced I shall not live to be old. I am not a child, and I need not advice of this kind. I have talents, and a profession to follow, and should age come on, shall be in no want of a provision." At this she burst into tears, and lamented that she had not at her outset in life met with a man who would have treated her as a wife ought to have been;

adding, "I know too well my faults and my imprudence ; but one folly led to another, and vanity, which is my greatest failing, encouraged by the attention I met from men of rank and fortune, induced me to accept offers which should have been spurned. Thus introduced into a bad plan of life, necessity kept it up, and I have become a sacrifice to my own folly. Though in the highest splendour, I often look down, and envy the situation of the lowest of my servants, and fancy her far more happy. She earns her bread by her industry, and when her daily work is done, can sit down with a quiet conscience, clear from vice. Many a cottage have I looked on with a wishful eye, and thought the people within, though poor, and perhaps without a chair to sit upon, much more happy and contented than I, who passed it in a coach-and-four, attended with a suite of servants." Here her tears again interrupted her, and she was with difficulty withdrawn from these foreboding accusations of herself—

"The shaft was shot, but had not fallen yet."

This striking confession of her inward misery took place at Brighton, where, soon after, she walked out on the Steyne, and was the admiration of all beholders, many of the ladies exclaiming loud enough to be heard, "There is that divine face ! that beautiful creature ! What a sweet woman !"

In the course of a short time her debts began to be troublesome, and she was reduced to the necessity of pawning some of her jewels, and her protector became less prodigal of his presents, while, with the increase of her embarrassments, her conduct grew more irregular, and her circumspection less guarded. Her infidelities,

at last, reached to such a pitch of notoriety, that the weak and fond nobleman, who seemed to set no limit at one time to his indulgence, in consequence of her ostrich-like cunning, in a profligate flight that she made in his absence to Ireland, broke off the connexion with her altogether. A rapid downward doom was then inevitable. A subscription was attempted, and failed, or rather was so unproductive as to show that the epoch of her alluring was past. But the details of her subsequent history are painful to describe, and consist only of such transactions as ever attend the progress of vice, and the curtain must be dropped on the scenes of her last act. She died at Edinburgh, on the 1st of July 1801, it has been alleged by swallowing laudanum, but the odious narrative of her biographer ascribes her death to consumption, and in circumstances so deplorable, that she was supported by the weekly contributions of the players.

MISS FARREN.

THE materials for the life of this elegant lady are few, and, except in one incident not remarkable. Her memory, however, ought to be cherished among the players, not so much on account of her eminence in the profession, as for the example she set in the propriety of her conduct, which, notwithstanding all the temptations that surrounded her, was so unblemished as to make her elevation to an ancient coronet seem almost a becoming reward. But, perhaps, it belongs to the merits of her character, that her career, though one of the most distinguished, has been so free of adventure. The life of an actor, after reputation has been established, flows on in an unvaried tenour, save when native eccentricity impels to deviation.

Miss Farren was born in 1759. Her father was a surgeon and apothecary in Cork, and her mother the daughter of a brewer in Liverpool. There was, therefore, nothing in the circumstances of her birth particularly calculated to produce that ease, grace, and delicacy for which she was afterwards justly celebrated. They were, like the brilliancy of Mrs. Woffington, natural gifts polished by correct taste, and regulated by good sense and discernment. Her early domestic circumstances were indeed unfavourable to the acquisition of elegance, and it must ever be ascribed both to talent and judg-

ment that she rose so beautifully above them—for the habits of her father were low and irregular, and had it not been for the exertions of her mother, and the assistance occasionally received from her relations, the condition of the family must have been wretched in the extreme.

Although the world possesses no record of the difficulties which clouded the morning of Miss Farren's life, they were of a kind easily conceived. Penury blew blighting, and grief at the sight of a parent, often deformed by dissipation, and yet in other moments exhibiting qualities entitled to love and esteem, darkened the aspect of her future fortunes.

She was very young when she made her first appearance on the stage. It was at Liverpool, in 1773, in the character of Rosetta, in the comic opera of *Love in a Village*, but, although then only in her fifteenth year, she gave such promise of excellence, that she almost immediately became a favourite with the public, and afterwards, with increasing estimation, acted at Shrewsbury, Chester, and those other towns which then constituted the orbit of the Liverpool company.

Younger, the manager, was an old and experienced veteran; he saw, from the first night, that Miss Farren was destined to attain distinction in her profession, and assisted her studies, and watched over her with parental solicitude. In 1777, he advised her to seek her fortune in London, and gave her an introduction to the elder Colman, at whose theatre in the Haymarket she soon after appeared, on the 10th of June, as Miss Hardcastle, in *She Stoops to Conquer*.*

* Edwin and Henderson also appeared on the same night.

It is not a part that was exactly suited to the display of her peculiar excellencies, but she nevertheless acquitted herself so well in it, that the newspaper critics described her performance as not unworthy of the great theatres. Her person was thin, genteel, and above the middle stature ; her countenance expressive, and full of sensibility ; her voice clear, but rather sharp and unvaried ; her action not awkward, and her delivery emphatic and distinct. "When," says the critic of the day, "Miss Farren learns to tread the stage with more ease ; to modulate and vary her voice ; to correct, inspire, and regulate her action ; and to give a proper utterance to her feelings, by a suitable expression of voice and countenance, in our opinion she will be a most valuable acquisition to our London theatres."

Considering the haste in which the morning criticisms on the theatres are written, and the little time allowed to solicit the fittest phrase to convey the degree of merit that the critics would express, it is still sufficiently obvious that her first appearance must have been highly satisfactory to the public, and encouraging to herself. But the true bent of her talents was not at the time perceived, and was rather a disclosure by accident to herself, the managers and the audience.

In the winter she accepted an offer from Covent Garden, but she did not greatly increase her fame there ; for the managers placed her in tragedy, where, though her taste and good sense allowed no failure, she yet could achieve nothing beyond respectable mediocrity. At Drury Lane theatre she, however, found her proper stage, to which she soon after removed, but still as a tragic actress, till accident brought her into her destined sphere.

It happened that Mrs. Abington, the delight of the town in her particular range of character, went to Covent Garden, and the proprietors selected Miss Farren to supply her place. The choice at the time was deemed hazardous to the fame of the lady. The public had previously entertained great hopes of her, and it was on that anticipation that she had been selected; but Mrs. Abington was so established in the parts that Miss Farren was called on to supply, that they were in a great measure considered as peculiarly her own: a circumstance that exposed her acting to a severe test, placing her, a novice, in comparison with one, who to great natural excellence added long experience; but she withstood the ordeal. Parsons, who had the tact to discover her true merit, advised her to make her experiment in the rivalry, with Lady Townley; and so complete was her success, that the performance was not only crowned with great applause, but procured her the acquaintance of many of the most respectable in the fashionable circles.

In the style of her acting as Lady Townley I have been often assured that she afforded a very fascinating representation of a thoughtless lady of quality, whose real virtues were disguised by follies carelessly assumed. It was marked with even more delicacy than Mrs. Abington had been able to show in any of her performances, and in this respect finely presented a gentlewoman of the same nature, but in the opinion of the public more refined. Her talents were perhaps, however, less versatile, and after having seen her in all those different characters, in which she was deemed happiest, the conclusion was general, that although Lady Townley was not her most pleasing personation, it was the part in which her art and endowment were best shown. The public pre-

ferred her Lady Teazle, and it appears that it must have been distinguished by some superior charm ; but I have been told by good judges that it was in several points not so appropriate in manner as the performance of Mrs. Jordan. Those of that opinion regarded it as too much of the fine lady, and defective in those little points and sparkles of rusticity, which are still by the philosophical critics supposed to mark the country education of the fascinating heroine. She was as the camelio of the conservatory—soft, beautiful, and delicate ; and Mrs. Jordan's as the rose of the garden, sprinkled with dew.

It cannot be disputed, from all I have been ever able to learn respecting the style of Miss Farren, that, although it was superior, indeed, of its kind, her talents were of very limited scope. In the ladies of comedy she had no competitor ; they were, however, all much alike, and equally remarkable for that sensitive delicacy which may be said to have been her distinguishing characteristic ; in other parts, though always respectable, she could never exhibit any thing like the splendour which fascinated in her proper walk.

She had not been long on the London stage when, by the propriety of her private conduct, and the gracefulness of her professional merit, she was invited to distinguished parties in fashionable life, where she attracted the attention of the Earl of Derby. The domestic circumstances of his Lordship rendered a union impossible so long as his Countess lived, and the profession and origin of Miss Farren might have rendered, therefore, a liaison between them not offensive in the eyes of many in the world. But not a whisper of scandal was breathed upon their intimacy. His Lordship, on the contrary, discovered that, the more he knew of her, she better deserved his esteem, and they judiciously placed

a restraint on their mutual passion by never being seen together but in the presence of a third party.

At length the Countess of Derby, who had lived long separate from her lord, died, and the way being thus cleared for Miss Farren, she took leave of the public at Drury Lane on the 7th of April 1797, as Lady Teazle in *The School for Scandal*, and, on the 8th of May following, was married to the Earl by special licence, at his Lordship's mansion in Grosvenor Square. With this event her biography, according to the plan of this work, should conclude, but it would look like stinted praise to amiable merit were it omitted to be mentioned that, in real dignity, she conducted herself as elegantly deserving of admiration, as in the mimic scene. Queen Charlotte, the most rigid discriminator of female worth, received her with marks of special recognizance, and it must be regarded as a peculiar honour, conferred for the blamelessness of her professional life, that she was selected to make one in the procession at the marriage of the Princess Royal. She is now dead, after having long enjoyed the distinctions and opulence of her rank.*

* Considering the tone of approbation in which the foregoing sketch has been expressed, it is perhaps necessary to mention that I have perused with attention the Memoirs of Lady Derby, published under the signature of Petronius Arbiter, and that, although the author has indulged himself in ill-natured and envious satire, he has not found that his malice could impute worse to her than original poverty. The biographical sketch, in reply to that sordid attack, contradicts some of the alleged calumny; but no contradiction was necessary, except on the imputed ingratitude to Mr. Younger of Liverpool, and that has been effectually proved to have been an invention. Doubtless the elevation to which she had raised herself in private society may have made her fastidious towards some of the players, and provoked tattle and enmity; but the decorum with which she upheld her rank as a Countess goes far to prove the solid worth of her character.

MRS. JORDAN.

It is impossible to think of this lady without pleasure, or to read her story without pity. The name by which she became so celebrated was assumed; her real name was Dorothy Bland, and it is conjectured that she was born in Waterford, about the year 1762. In 1777, she made her first appearance on the stage in Dublin, as Miss Francis, under the management of Ryder, in the Phebe of *As You Like It*; but it was not till the next season, when engaged with his rival Daly, that her theatrical career properly began.

She was taken by him to Cork, in her seventeenth year, and though not eminent for great beauty, was much admired for an archness of manner even more winning. The playhouse happened that season not to be popular, and, on her benefit, the audience was so thin, that the young men present insisted she should be favoured with another night, which being granted, they exerted themselves so well in the disposal of tickets, that the result far exceeded her expectations: an incident which sufficiently proves that her talents, and the charm of her delightful and sportive simplicity, were even then so obvious as to be deemed entitled to encouragement.

It was not, however, till July 1782, that Mrs. Jordan came to Leeds in England, where she arrived with her mother, brother, and sister. Tate Wilkinson was

manager, and in Mrs. Bland, the mother, he discovered a lady who had performed Desdemona with himself at Dublin twenty-four years before. He, in consequence of that circumstance, rejoiced to see them, and inquired of our heroine whether her line was tragedy, comedy, or opera, and was exceedingly astonished when answered "all." After some conversation, he formed an engagement with her, and, on the 11th of July 1782, she was put up for Calista in *The Fair Penitent*.

Wilkinson, during their first interview, had detected no comic symptom about her; but the melody of her voice, in a few lines which she repeated of that part, deeply affected his feelings, and he poured out his praise of the truth and nature with which she had comprehended their sentiment, with no stinted applause.

Besides the tragic part of Calista, it was announced in the bills that she would sing the song of *The Greenwood Laddie*, but, on the night of her appearance, she was listened to with so much attention during the tragedy, that he became apprehensive at the ludicrous idea of Calista rising from the dead and rushing before the audience to sing a ballad which nobody cared about; his apprehensions, however, were of short duration, when she jumped on the stage with her elastic spring, in a frock and mob-cap, and, with her voice and smile fascinated the audience.

From Leeds she proceeded with Wilkinson to York. It was then the race-week, when the theatre is always well attended, and an opportunity was offered her of playing Priscilla Tomboy in *The Romp*, before William Smith of Drury Lane. Smith was warm-hearted and gentlemanly, and when he discovered merit was not slow in communicating to others the impression he had received from it. He both wrote and spoke of Mrs. Jordan's talents

with enthusiasm, insomuch that Wilkinson became alarmed lest he should be obliged to part with his "treasure."

From York she went with the company round their circuit, in the course of which the manager thought that Sheffield might merit a visit, although of late that town had shown a ruinous indifference to theatrical exhibitions; accordingly, they went also thither, and her reputation was considerably increased by her unabated endeavours to attain excellence.

The company then travelled to Kingston-upon-Hull, where, by the end of the year, her talents so highly excited the envy of her stage sisters, that they began to insinuate detraction against her private conduct, insomuch that her reception was very chilling; but when it became known that her manners were decorous, and her diligence extraordinary, she was fully received into favour, and her benefit flatteringly attended.

In 1783 she appeared for the first time in a male part, William, in the pleasing opera of *Rosina*, though with éclat, not probably with that warmth of applause which she subsequently received in it; for a country audience, in these transformations, is generally more fastidious than a metropolitan.

During the spring meeting at York, the jealousy of the female performers often annoyed her, particularly a Mrs. Ward, a competitor with her in male parts. This lady was at the head of the spiteful, who placed themselves at the stage-doors, and with all their ingenuity endeavoured to disturb the self-possession of Mrs. Jordan while acting. In this envious cruelty they persevered so long that at last she affected to be exceedingly distressed by the annoyance, and intreated the sympathy of the audience by the appearance she assumed. This

led to inquiries, and, in the end, the malignants were scattered from their post.

At this period there was a Mrs. Brown in the company, possessed of great comic talent, who in her range of characters acted the Country Girl in such a manner as to attract the particular attention of Mrs. Jordan, who till then was unacquainted with the part. Those who recollect the rich excellence and artlessness with which she afterwards performed this character, will readily acknowledge that the conception of it must have been truly her own, but detraction has ascribed her grace and naïveté in it to an imitation of Mrs. Brown,—as if that could be called an imitation which far transcended the original. The elastic step, the artless action, the sincere laugh, and, if the expression may be used, the juicy tones of her clear and melodious voice, so peculiar to Mrs. Jordan, could never have been attained by studying any other. The manner in which she used to pronounce the single word “ecod!” was as if she had taken a mouthful of some ripe and delicious peach.

In 1785 Mrs. Jordan was engaged for Drury Lane theatre, and it is said that previous to her departure from Tate Wilkinson’s company she evinced a degree of chagrin at something in her situation with it, which often betrayed her into spirits of petulance at variance with the wonted tenour of her excellent temper, insomuch that it tended to deteriorate the favour which she had enjoyed with the public, and in consequence her benefit at Leeds was very thinly attended. Mrs. Siddons, who saw her while this mood was on her, formed no very elevated idea of her powers, and thought she was better where she was than to venture on the London boards.

Her last performance with Wilkinson’s company was

at Wakefield, on Friday September 9, 1785, as Patrick in *The Poor Soldier*, after which she proceeded to fulfill her London engagement, and, it is said, diffident of success; indeed, it would seem that she had still no reason to be otherwise, for, whatever might be her own consciousness of ability, her success in the country had not been eminently triumphant, as her salary, which was only four pounds per week, sufficiently proves.

On the 18th of October 1785, she made her appearance in *The Country Girl*. "She came to town," says Mrs. Inchbald, "with no report in her favour to elevate her above a very moderate salary, or to attract more than a very moderate house when she appeared. But here moderation stopped. She at once displayed such consummate art with such bewitching nature, such excellent sense, and such innocent simplicity, that her auditors were boundless in their plaudits, and so warm in their praises when they left the theatre, that their friends at home would not give credit to the extent of their eulogiums." Such is the account of Mrs. Jordan's first appearance in the metropolis, and perhaps no actress ever excited so much true laughter as this delightful lady in the course of her subsequent career.

Her second part was Viola, in *The Twelfth Night*, which she acted on the 11th of November 1785. Her merit in this very different character from Peggy was unquestionably of as high an order, but it was of that kind which is more frequently exhibited, and though requiring equal judgment, stands less in need of peculiar endowment. To Viola succeeded Imogen, in *Cymbeline*, a part of the same genus, and although it never admitted of a question that in these delicate characters Mrs.

Jordan shone with unrivalled excellence, yet the taste of the town took more to her comic vein; nor is this to be much wondered at, for, in the representations on the stage, a farce somehow affords more pleasure, though of a different kind, than even *Macbeth*; and the same thing often happens in literature; authors of very paltry powers are frequently raised for a time to great popularity, while those of far higher genius are allowed to pine in neglect. Milton was a century in coming to his fame as a poet.

In the course of the season Mrs. Jordan had so fully established herself in the good graces of the London audience, that her salary was doubled, and two benefits allowed her. When the season was over, she returned to Leeds, thinking it not improbable that Wilkinson, now that she had stood the ordeal of London, would intreat her to act. On the night of her arrival she went to the theatre, and was recognized with pleasure by the audience, and between the play and farce went down to the green-room and made her compliments to her former associates. Afterwards, as she had anticipated, the manager solicited her to act for a single night, dividing the profits with her, after deducting fifteen pounds for the expenses. In this he acted with commendable liberality, for he did not expect any great profit; he remembered that the Leeds people had enjoyed or neglected her for four summers, and had not distinguished her farewell benefit by any particular patronage. But Fashion had worked a mighty change; though Mrs. Jordan was still only the same, the test of London had determined her value, and the Leeds public longed to see the actress who was now found inestimable, but whom so few months before they had regarded as but little

worthy of their esteem. On the 21st of June she performed in *The Country Girl*, and the house overflowed before the play began: no less than seven rows of the pit were laid into boxes. It is this uncertainty in the favour of the public that deprives their applause of half its value. Mrs. Jordan could not but rejoice in the profits of her performance; if she had any gratification in the plaudits of the crowd, it must have partaken of a vindictive sentiment, such as the injured feel when they obtain justice.

From Leeds she proceeded to York, where she again performed her most celebrated parts, but not with such decided success as she expected; for Mrs. Siddons, who was to succeed her, was there the favourite. But on going North, to Edinburgh, her reception was all she could desire, and in taking her benefit she evinced her gratitude by reciting a poetical address of her own composition, easy and fluent in the verse, and rather, perhaps, above the ordinary chiming of such sort of stage stratagems. She thence proceeded to Glasgow, where she was also welcomed with much distinction; indeed, to do the play-goers of that city justice, they on this occasion showed something of classic taste mingled with a little jealousy of their Edinburgh neighbours. They presented her with a gold medal, with an inscription, as Mr. Boaden says, not badly twined, and transmitted it with a single line of admiration and jealousy.

“TO MRS. JORDAN.

“MADAM,

“ACCEPT this trifle from the Glasgow audience, who are as great admirers of genius as the critics of Edinburgh.”

The inscription on the medal was allusive to the Glasgow arms, a tree, &c.

“ Bays from our tree you could not gather,
No branch of it deserves that name ;
So take it all, call it a feather,
And place it in your cap of fame.”

This is certainly not very perspicuous, and needs a note to explain it, but the conceit of honouring a distinguished public person with a medal, had something elegant in it.

She then returned to Drury Lane theatre, and her regular career now commenced. Her life falling into the routine of the profession, for a long time afforded few incidents into which the public could have any legitimate authority to pry.

In the summer (1787) she again made another professional tour northward, and during the three nights she performed at Leeds, her success was as brilliant as on the single night on which she acted there the preceding year. But considering her now at the summit of her profession; it is not my intention to be more circumstantial. Those who recollect her prime, must acknowledge that in several favourite parts she has never had any competitor that could in the remotest degree be compared with her. In her peculiar comic style, there was the strongest stamp of what is called genius that can well be imagined; it was emphatically natural, but such nature as is only rarely seen, and yet it was altogether art—consummate art.

To compare Mrs. Jordan's merits with those of Mrs. Siddons, if poetical supremacy must be awarded to the deliberate grandeur and solemnity of the latter, the former

must still be allowed to have been in her own walk equally great, though the greatness was of a different kind. In the performance of Mrs. Siddons, the spectator sat astonished, and at her occasional bursts of glorious passion expressed to his neighbour wonder and delight; but no one had ever that perception of art who saw Mrs. Jordan in her favourite characters: no one ever felt that he beheld reality in Mrs. Siddons, but something more sublime,—the poetry of human nature; and yet in the midst of an enjoyment equally refined, it was impossible ever to imagine that the acting of her winning contemporary was the effect of assumed feelings and artificial impulses. It was the perfect manner in which Mrs. Jordan inhaled the spirit of her part that her inimitable power of delighting consisted.

The progress of Mrs. Jordan in her profession was marked in Yorkshire with less approbation than in any other part of the kingdom, and perhaps it was owing to her having discerned the indifferent judgment exercised by the audiences there, that caused her to regard her first departure for London with that distaste against them which has been already noticed. It is said, that at one time she felt their insensibility so strongly that she declared she never would act again among them. Whether this coldness on their part arose from any general carelessness about dramatic entertainments, or particular feeling towards her, might be susceptible of question, had not Mrs. Siddons observed in her own case the same thing as a common attendant on acting in the country. “Acting Isabella, for instance,” said she, “out of London, is double fatigue; there the loud and long applause at the great points and striking situations invigorated the system, and the time it occupied recruited the health and nerve.”

A cold, respectful, hard audience chills and deadens an actress, and throws her back upon herself; whereas the warmth of approbation confirms her in the character, and she kindles with the enthusiasm she feels around."

This is no doubt true: it has been often observed that the players do not perform so well to thin audiences as when the theatre is full; but I am inclined to think that the cursory inspection of the merits of Mrs. Jordan in Yorkshire was not altogether owing to this cause, but had something of a speciality of taste in it. They preferred the courtly style of Miss Farren, which, with all its elegance, was of a far lower kind than the playful buoyancy of Mrs. Jordan's: a circumstance which suggests, as a conjecture, that they were in those days probably inferior in taste to many other parts of the country where there is alike less opulence and fewer pretensions to fashion. It may not, in fact, however have been so, but the admiration of attitudinarian gracefulness has long been regarded as the mintage of rank by those who do not consider that it is only an acquirement impressed by education to conceal some natural deficiency; at least, the high and low vulgar have ever a notion that the visible touch of the dancing-master is necessary to authenticate polite manners, and to verify the true demeanour of fashionable life. They cannot imagine that all the real difference between a good and bad manner consists in the former being only more gentle and more guarded in the disclosure of common feelings. The hoyden tickling of propriety, which Mrs. Jordan in her romping so felicitously practised, was among the extremest sallies of a happy nature, and in its essence as pure as the graces that were deemed more genteel. Had the effervescence of her familiarity been stronger,

it might have offended delicacy, but its joyous sparkling only increased the aroma.

In 1790, when she formed her domestic connexion with the Duke of Clarence, she was considerably annoyed at the strictures of the newspapers on that circumstance, for by the dint of their endeavours to represent her as losing her respect for the public in consequence of private blandishments, a very strong feeling was excited. On the 10th of December 1790 this was so obviously the case, that when she came on the stage the displeasure was manifest, but she advanced to the front and intrepidly said to the audience :—

“Ladies and Gentlemen,

“I should conceive myself utterly unworthy of your favour, if the slightest mark of public disapprobation did not affect me very sensibly.

“Since I have had the honour and the happiness to strive here to please you, it has been my constant endeavour, by unremitting assiduity, to merit your approbation. I beg leave to assure you, upon my honour, that I have never absented myself one minute from the duties of my profession but from real indisposition; thus having invariably acted, I *do* consider myself under the public protection.”

The force of manner in which this was delivered, and the style in which she resumed her character in the play, produced all the effect that could have been desired, and from that time her domestic situation was not adverted to as a cause to annoy her in her profession. The incident is, however, curious, as affording a trait of the personal energy of her character more decisive than

any other hitherto mentioned; for she was naturally nervous and even timid, until actually before the audience on the stage. It might, therefore, have been supposed that in this little scene she would have been incapable of such self-possession; she appears, however, to have enjoyed great moral courage, and to have possessed resources in it that qualified her to withstand the shocks of adversity with firmness and resolution.

In her feelings Mrs. Jordan was warm and generous; in those exhibitions of the theatre, given to assist individual distress, and to aid the families of the sailors who suffered in the great sea-fights, her assistance was ever ready. An anecdote of her private charity possesses both beauty and character. When at Chester, a widow with three young children was thrown into prison by a creditor for a small debt, which, with expenses, amounted to eight pounds; this Mrs. Jordan paid. On the afternoon of the same day the poor woman was liberated, and as her benefactor was taking her usual walk, the widow with her children followed, and just as Mrs. Jordan had taken shelter in a porch from a shower of rain, dropped on her knees in gratitude to thank her. The children, beholding the emotion of their mother, by their cries made the scene so affecting, that Mrs. Jordan, unable to control her feelings, stooped to kiss the children, and slipping a pound note into the mother's hand, requested, in her usual playful manner, that she would go away.

Another person, who had taken shelter under the porch and witnessed the transaction, came forward and said, "Lady, pardon the freedom of a stranger, but would to the Lord the world were all like thee!"

His figure bespoke his calling, and she immediately retreated a little, and said, "No, I won't shake hands with you."

"Why?"

"Because you are a Methodist preacher, and when you know who I am, you'll send me to the Devil."

"The Lord forbid! I am, as you say, a preacher of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, who tells us to clothe the naked, feed the hungry, and relieve the distressed; and do you think I can behold a sister fulfil the commands of my Great Master without feeling that spiritual attachment which leads me to break through worldly customs, and offer you the hand of friendship and brotherly love?"

"Well, you are a good old soul, I dare say, but I don't like fanatics, and you'll not like me when I tell you who I am."

"I hope I shall."

"Well, then, I am a player."

The preacher sighed.

"Yes, I am a player, and you must have heard of me, —Mrs. Jordan is my name."

After a short pause he again extended his hand, and, with a complaisant countenance, replied,

"The Lord bless thee, whoever thou art! His goodness is unlimited. He has bestowed on thee a large portion of his spirit; and, as to thy calling, if thy soul upbraid thee not, the Lord forbid that I should!"

Thus reconciled, and the rain abated, they left the porch: the offer of his arm was accepted, and they proceeded arm-in-arm together; at parting, the preacher shook hands with her, saying,

"Fare thee well, sister; I know not what the principles of people of thy calling may be; thou art the

first I ever conversed with; but, if their benevolent practices equal thine, I hope and trust at the great day the Almighty will say to each, 'Thy sins are forgiven thee.' "

The education of Mrs. Jordan appears to have been bestowed on a better soil than is common to the ladies of the stage, whose literary attainments are rarely remarkable. That she possessed a vivid zest for poetry may be naturally concluded from the taste she evinced in the selection of such gentle parts as Viola and Imogen; but she also wrote verses with facility, and sometimes with a glow of sentiment that was often elegant and almost poetical. Whether, however, her pen ever aspired to greater things than occasional lines, does not seem to be determined, but, from those she has written, there can be no doubt that she was capable of higher flights and more considerable effusions.

From 1809 to 1811, it was publicly alleged that the circumstances of the Duke of Clarence were embarrassed, and also that his connexion with Mrs. Jordan was no longer productive of that felicity which had once rendered it a topic of admiration, but it has since been ascertained that the former allegation was grossly exaggerated, and that the latter was untrue. Why, then, it may be asked, did they separate? To this question I presume not to offer an answer, but I am inclined to think that the cause may, perhaps, be found in the state of the Royal family. With, therefore, no other grounds for conjecture, I imagine that the separation was dictated by state policy, for, notwithstanding the numerous family of George III. the prospect of male heirs from him to the crown was exceedingly doubtful, and, in proportion to the uncertainty, it is natural to suppose that the family

may have become anxious for the marriage of the Princess. I do not, however, insist on this notion, but it appears as likely to have been the real cause of the separation, as many of the absurd and unjust tales industriously published at the time concerning it. I ground my opinion on the simple fact that there was no quarrel between the parties when the separation did take place; on the contrary, the Duke himself communicated to Mrs. Jordan the painful intelligence of the necessity by which he was constrained. In all things he has acted towards herself and their mutual family with exemplary liberality, and it is understood, that he still cherishes her memory with esteem and affection.

Moreover, I confess myself one of those who do not think that the close of Mrs. Jordan's life was at all of that destitute kind which the world has been malignantly taught to believe. The disease of which this fascinating woman died, on the 3rd of July 1816, was itself of a kind calculated to produce excessive misery of mind in its progress, and the condition in which it may be said to have found her, was not only of her own choice but the result of advice. To her family, the reports abroad concerning her end must have been most afflicting, and yet it is impossible to discover in the real circumstances aught that should have wounded their feelings, or excited the sensibility of the public. The tale, however, is a ravelled skein, and it has been doubly entangled by misrepresentation. Yet, in its leading circumstances, it possesses this redeeming quality, that she herself never complained of any injurious treatment from the Duke, but only from her own friends; nor did she conceive herself placed in such distress as to preclude the hope of being soon released from her difficulties. She died, it is true, in an unhappy crisis of her

affairs, but the embarrassment was not of such a kind as might not have been, in a short time, surmounted.

More of calamitous accident certainly mingled with her latter days than might have been anticipated from her uniform train of good fortune, but still she can in no respect be considered as unfortunate, for though her lot, in the end, was embittered by mischances, over which no prudence could exercise a decided control, her greatest error was owing to her own easy good-nature, and had its origin in kindness. All that related to herself was frank and above board, insomuch that her feminine frailties partook of the character of virtues; and it cannot be said that she was defective in more than one feminine grace, whilst she possessed many charms which those, proud of that solitary ornament, are often unambitious to acquire. In a word, she lived in a flutter, and died in vexation, but her life to the public was untarnished as an actress by any extraordinary sorrow or stain.

Independent of her histrionic merits, Mrs. Jordan was justly entitled to be regarded as possessing great general talent. I have already mentioned her literary attainments; but it is chiefly to the stamina of her understanding that I allude. Though of an easy nature, and too prone to confide in those for whom she cherished friendship or esteem, she yet possessed no ordinary discernment in business. Tate Wilkinson says of her, in 1790, that, "at making a bargain, Mrs. Jordan is too many for the cunningest devil of us all." Nor ought I to omit, in summing up her character, when reflecting on the rank and consideration to which her family has been raised, that he also was prophetically happy in calling her "the lucky child of Fortune, lulled, caressed, and nursed in the lap of Nature."

JOHN PHILIP KEMBLE.

THE Kemble dynasty is the most illustrious that has ever occupied the mimic throne. It succeeded the Cibber, but, in proportion as the genius of Mrs. Siddons excelled that of old Colley, so has the renown of her house transcended not only that of his, but of every other which the annals of the stage record. Next to the arch-empress* of the drama, her brother, John Philip, is the most distinguished of all the histrionic princes of their line. He was born at Prescott, in Lancashire, on the 1st of February 1757.

His father being the manager of a respectable provincial company, he was early introduced on the stage. On the 12th of February 1767, he performed at Worcester the part of the Duke of York, in Havard's *Charles the First*, a tragedy which, at that time, was not only popular but celebrated for its affecting pathos. How it should ever have been alleged that the father of Kemble never intended the stage for his profession is of no importance to ascertain; in no other would he have been more eminent, and certainly his introduction upon the boards, at the age of ten, justifies the supposition that, if he had not been intended for a player, it was a strange oversight to awaken his dramatic taste so early.

From Worcester, where he attended a preparatory

* An epithet given by the Russians to Catherine II.

school, he was sent to the Roman Catholic charitable seminary at Sedgely-park to complete his education, and he distinguished himself there by his diligence and proficiency, insomuch that it was resolved to send him to the English college at Douay, to qualify him for the church.

At Douay he acquired, besides the reputation of being a good scholar, distinction as a reciter of English poetry, and endeared himself to his companions by accepting the task of getting by heart two books of Homer, which had been imposed on his class as a vicarious atonement for some indiscretion. But, although his appearance at college was unquestionably highly to his credit, his mind had no inclination to the Church; all his views and hopes were directed to the theatre, and accordingly, when he returned to England, he made his first professional appearance on the 8th of January 1776, as Theodosius, at Wolverhampton.

There is no reason to believe that, in the beginning of his career, Kemble was particularly eminent; but Boaden derides the attempts that have been made to attach to his history some of the old established anecdotes and expedients which tradition has amusingly ascribed to other players. He mentions, however, that while Kemble was little more than twenty, he had produced some dramatic pieces, subsequently played at York, Liverpool, and Edinburgh, and delivered lectures upon oratory, sacred and profane, circumstances which sufficiently of themselves show a desire to acquire professional reputation.

From York he went to Wakefield, and made his first appearance, as Captain Plume, in the *Recruiting Officer*. This attempt, with the impression of his Coriolanus upon us, seems incredible; but there have been real heroes who were once prankful cadets and feather-headed ensigns.

Though the necessities of the stroller's vocation obliged

him to try his powers in all characters, Kemble's predilection was uniformly towards tragedy, and in the same year that he affected to do *Archer*, he brought out his own tragedy of *Belisarius*, which at the time was deemed creditable to his efforts. On the 10th of April following, 1779, at York, he also brought out a comedy called *The Female Officer*; on which occasion Earl Percy formed his acquaintance, and continued to regard him with particular partiality during life.

An anecdote of him, at this period, is highly characteristic of the pride with which he sustained himself when he had established his fame in London.

During the performance of *Zenobia*, the stage-box was occupied by a young lady of some consideration, but distinguished, as it would appear, by vulgarity and ill-breeding, which vented itself in loquacious and impertinent criticism. Towards the close of the last act she made herself audibly odious by her strictures on Kemble, and the actress with whom he was then performing; and he retaliated with looks of scorn that would have put to the blush one of less modesty. Instead, however, of repressing her impudence, his disdain was unmannerly answered with loud peals of laughter. Kemble suddenly stopped, and being called on by the audience to proceed, with great gravity and a bow to the damsel in the box, said,

"I am ready to proceed with the play as soon as *THAT* lady has finished her conversation, which I perceive the going on with the tragedy only interrupts."

The audience vindicated themselves, and ordered the lady and her party as nuisances out of the theatre. I have not heard her name, otherwise I should have done all in my power to confer on her celebrity as long as

these pages are likely to be read, for I can conceive no offence in manners equal to the audacity of a vulgar person presuming to insult the public.

The outrage did not, however, end with dismissing her from the theatre; Miss was, forsooth, offended, and with the despicable presumption that became one that could act with so little delicacy, she incited some poor fellows of the militia to demand reparation for her wounded feelings. They attempted to alarm the manager; but he did Kemble justice—who attended these individuals, and coolly refused to make any apology. The gallant officers returned to their Moll Flaggon with their fingers in their mouths, and reported how contemptuously they had been received. The audience had, in the mean time, determined to support Kemble, and John Bull loudly calling for him, with his wonted sweet voice, advised him to make no apology. But some of the lady's kith or kin told Kemble, who was then on the stage, to ask pardon.

"Pardon!" cried Kemble, "ask pardon! no, Sirs—NEVER!" and quitted the stage.

For several nights after, the same senseless and spiritless insolence persecuted him on the lady's account.—"Lady! marry come up!"—But Kemble acted with a firmness that would have done honour to a nobler cause—if any cause can be more noble than that of resenting such audacity. This mighty madam was, after all, but a Baronet's daughter.

In 1780, under the title of *Oh! it's Impossible!* Kemble brought out an alteration of *The Comedy of Errors*, in which, with some whimsicality, he puzzled the audience, as well as the dramatis personæ, by making the

two Dromios black-a-moors; as if the humour of the piece did not depend on the audience being always sensible of the difference between them.

The fame of Kemble was now beginning to reach London; for, independent of his dramas, which, however, were not brilliant, his lectures on oratory served to obtain for him the respect of many within the York district of theatres, who went not to the play-houses.

In 1781, he performed Puff in *The Critic*, at Edinburgh, and afterwards he accepted an engagement at Dublin. Mrs. Jordan was then in the Irish metropolis, and known to the playgoers as Miss Francis; but all the party then in Dublin were eclipsed by Kemble.

From Dublin he went to Cork, where his reception was less splendid; the Corkers disputed the taste of the capital, and judged for themselves. He thence proceeded to Limerick, and in October 1782 returned to Dublin; but it was not until the summer of the following year that the superiority of his merit was determined by his being brought into comparison with Mrs. Siddons.

It was in this season that Miss Philips, afterwards the celebrated Mrs. Crouch, came to Dublin. Kemble became much attached to her, and would have married her had she permitted. The newspapers, however, which have at all times so much to say of the players that one is apt to imagine they are in their pay, had a great deal to do about this matter, and, among other things, gossiped till they were tired about an anecdote which must not be omitted.

Kemble and Miss Philips were at Cork, and he was intrusted by her father, who was ill of the gout, to see her home at night from the theatre till he should get

better. One evening, some young officers of the garrison wishing to assume the honour, besieged her dressing-room door; she refused to go with them, but they would not leave the house without her. Kemble took his sword, and passing through them said,

“Gentlemen, Mr. Philips, who is confined by illness, has requested me to conduct his daughter from the theatre; and as gentlemen I trust you will not molest her, for, be assured, I will maintain the trust reposed in me.” After delivering this heroical speech, he then called to her that her father would be anxious for her return; she at length ventured forth, but, seeing the officers, she would again have retired; Kemble, however, caught hold of her, and with his wonted solemnity and in his best buskins, said, “Be under no apprehension, I am resolved to protect you; if any gentleman is dissatisfied with my behaviour, I will meet him, if he pleases, to-morrow morning, and if he can prove it to be wrong, I shall be ready to apologise for it.” It would have been more becoming, and a better reproof, had he called in the aid of the constables; but this flight of romance was attributed to love.

Kemble then went to London, and on the 30th of September 1783, made his first appearance at Drury Lane theatre as Hamlet. It was always with him a favourite part, but his performance in the character, when I saw him in his latter years, was pedantic,—more like a college-professor than a prince.

When he entered on the stage it is said that the spectators exclaimed, “How very like his sister!” and, as the performance proceeded, they thought his conception of the part original. It was undoubtedly so, for in

the character there was more of John Philip Kemble than of Hamlet the Dane. He certainly recited the principal speeches with good emphasis, and looked the pantomime of the part with much intelligence; but there was an evident art throughout, and the impression on me was that of Kemble trying how Hamlet should be done. It was a great effort of a great artist, but I could never discern aught in it save the rehearsal of an endeavour. He was to me the least satisfactory Hamlet I have ever seen, for he did and said some things so well that one was continually expecting when he would enter into the part. It was the most admirable piece of patch-work, art and nature, that the stage could exhibit; for if the spectator fixed on particular points and called them excellent, ten to one they were so, and beautiful beyond praise, but the intermediate passages between one of these and the next of the same kind was "dowlas, filthy dowlas." I never saw Kemble's Hamlet without alternate feelings of admiration and disgust, nor left the theatre without being angry that one so able to do well should do so ill.

In my opinion he misconceived the character, and too uniformly sustained throughout the whole part the same melancholy mood which had invested him before the interview with the ghost; whereas the poet has clearly indicated that he should be sometimes different: indeed, Hamlet himself not only feigns distraction of mind after he has seen the ghost, but actually says aside to Horatio, in a passage to which the actors make Marcellus always an auditor:

"Hamlet. Once more remove, good friends."

The obvious action in saying this is, that Hamlet should

take Horatio aside from Marcellus, and that the latter should observe to him,

“ *Horatio*. Oh, day and night ! but this is wondrous strange.”

The Prince then replies, and evidently to Horatio only,

“ *Ham*. And therefore, as a stranger, give it welcome.

There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy. But, come,
Swear as before, never, so help you mercy,
How strange or odd soe'er I bear myself,
(As I, perchance, hereafter shall think meet
To put an antick disposition on,)
That you, at such times seeing me, never shall,
With arms encumbered thus, or this head-shake,
Or by pronouncing of some doubtful phrase—
As Well, we know,—or We could an if we would,—
Or, If we list to speak,—or There may be an if there might,
(Or such ambiguous giving out) denote
That you know aught of me. This do ye swear,
So grace and mercy at your most need help you.”

The whole of this passage is obviously a confidential exhortation to Horatio alone, for to Marcellus he resumes the same antick disposition in which he was found by the two friends after the ghost had disappeared. The passage quoted, instead of being delivered as it was by Kemble like earnest reasoning, should be uttered with a grieved and loaded heart. And the

“ Rest, rest, perturbed spirit,”

is an apostrophe of a mind in extreme anguish. When this little apart scene with Horatio is over, I imagine, as the most natural course, that then Hamlet turned round to Marcellus, and again began in the affected craze with which he had previously shown himself,

“ So, gentlemen,
With all my love I do commend me to you,” &c.

But particular criticism of this kind does not fall within the design and scope of this work; on a part, however, so celebrated as that of Hamlet, and especially as it was performed by Kemble, I may hope for a little indulgence. Moreover, in this particular scene, as it affords a key to the whole character, for I conceive towards every other person but Horatio, Hamlet should from that time be seen infected with an "antick disposition," and that it is only in the soliloquies and when alone he is himself again. The text, indeed, in the last scene of the second act shows this, for from the interview after the disappearance of the Ghost, Hamlet is in his assumed madness; in that fine soliloquy, however, he throws off his disguise. Kemble in this also erred, for when Hamlet says to the gentlemen with whom he had been talking,

"Ay, so, God be wi' you,"

it should have been uttered fantastically, and then he should have looked cautiously around, apprehensive of being observed, and after a pause said,

"Now I am alone ;"

then, after a short meditation, begun,

"O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I."

The next scene in which he is in his natural character, is the famous soliloquy of

"To be, or not to be ;"

he is then not aware of the eaves-droppers around him, but when Ophelia breaks in upon him he instantly passes from the pensive rumination in which he had been engaged, puts on his "antick disposition," and all his conversation is in his feigned character.

In the scene with the players, who are strangers, and not being members of the court, Hamlet bears him as comports with his dignity; but when Polonius, Rosincrantz, and Guildenstern come in upon them, Hamlet again resumes his apparent insanity. They, however, no sooner retire and Horatio enters, than he is again himself, and speaks to him with the same sorrow and confidence that he had done in the former scene, and unlocks the cause of his hesitation, wishing human proof to convince him of his uncle's guilt, and that it was not "a damned ghost" that they had seen.

In the scene with the play Hamlet is again plainly in disguise, but Horatio is in his confidence, and by him he is understood. Still apprehensive of being observed, he continues mystical, for some of the spectators at the play are still on the stage in the little scene which follows the play, but only part of what passes between Hamlet and Horatio should be in foolery.

The words of the Prince, "Oh, good Horatio," should be the commencement of some confidential conversation, in which they are interrupted by the entrance of Rosincrantz and Guildenstern, towards whom Hamlet again puts on his madness; however, being satisfied that it was no "damned ghost," and that the King is the murderer, he begins to act on the suggestion of the ghost.

I need not, however, pursue this analysis farther; it is clear that Shakspeare's Hamlet has two characters, first, his own natural and gracious dispositions, and second, the artificial madness which he assumed after the interview with his father's spirit; but it always struck me as if Kemble attempted the part only as one, and that in this misconception lay the defect of his performance. In

the rational and natural scenes Kemble was admirable, but in the affected insanity, to my taste, odious; and, therefore, I have ever been of opinion, that although the performance of certain passages was great, the performance of the whole character was, for a man of his discernment, marvellously deficient in discrimination.

Kemble's second part in London was Richard III. Boaden, his eulogist, acknowledges that it was not so striking as in his latter years. The truth is, that Kemble, with many noble external qualities for a great actor, was one of those men of genius who are always progressive till the wane of their faculties, and who, at two distant and different periods of life, do not appear as the same individual. In Sir Giles Overreach, he was also not eminent when he first performed it, and in King John, which he undertook at the command of their Majesties, the audience considered him cold and artificial—a lay-figure.

But I do not propose to record all the characters which Kemble performed, because it can be of little use to the reader to receive merely a catalogue of parts. I would rather describe his merits, which were undoubtedly of a very high order, but it is a diseased swelling in truth to represent him supreme in all his parts.

I saw him first in Glasgow, so long ago now that the period is beyond my recollection, and the part was Macbeth. His appearance I well remember, but I was greatly disappointed when he spoke, and I recollect two gross blunders, which, young as I was, I felt to be in the worst possible conception. The first was in the manner in which he uttered,

“ Wake, Duncan, with this knocking.”

He really appeared to be in a towering passion, because Duncan slept too soundly; the other was in repeating—

“ To-morrow, and to-morrow.”

At which stately John appeared to be most absurdly angry; but when, years after, I saw him in London, he had corrected himself in both these points; he never became, however, thoroughly master of the part. The chiselling of the studio ever remained too conspicuous on the whole statue; but still there was no misconception in the general idea he had formed as to how Macbeth should be played, nor in his own endeavours to embody it. Had I never seen him in Cardinal Wolsey, and above all, in Coriolanus, I must have estimated his talents and taste far under the standard of his admirers, and his power in delineating the nicer discrimination of the lines and shades of a part as not above mediocrity. His chief force was in his attitudes, and in that respect he was so excellent, that by his excellence, the swarm of attitudinarians who have taken after his example, have introduced a species of action on the stage which has but a slight affinity to natural gesticulation.

The look of Kemble in pathetic parts was always touchingly beautiful; but sensible of his power in awakening tender sympathy, he often sustained the look too long, and was obliged in consequence, occasionally, to snivel, or snifter, one of the most disagreeable accidents that flesh is heir to; and when he did speak at last, he might as well have held his tongue, for the native infirmity of his voice became sepulchral. It was in his look and attitude that Kemble was great or tender; in the articulation of the sentiment he often failed. But let me not be misunderstood; because I object to his general artificial

manner, it is not to be imputed to me that I think mere nature should be the example, though it certainly ought to be the theme of acting. The object of the stage is to give pleasure, and to distill it from crimes and follies,—from actions that in real life would be hideous or contemptible. I do not therefore object to the principle of Kemble's action, for it was most judicious, but only to the execution, which was not so perfect as the conception. Acting should be to nature, what blank verse is to prose, a little more guarded and measured in its form, but still the same in language.

On the 8th December 1787, Kemble was married. It was thought that in choosing his wife, he did not avail himself of his worldly advantages; but, notwithstanding that address, which was often visible in his professional pursuits, there was much native simplicity in his personal character; he was at the same time shrewd enough to perceive that he was only flattered by the great on account of his professional excellence, and that he had no hold on them as a man. It argues but a shallow knowledge of the world, when one, without connexions or fortune, mistakes the attentions paid to his professional attainments for that kind of friendship which only exists among equals.

Boaden's account of the wedding-day ought not to be omitted. They were married in the morning; Mrs. Bannister, who accompanied the bride to church, inquired where they intended to eat their wedding-dinner. Kemble, who had made no arrangement, replied he did not know; at home, he supposed. Upon this Mrs. Bannister said, if they would honour Mr. Bannister and herself, they would be gratified. Kemble assented, and an early dinner was prepared, for both Bannister and the

bride were to act that evening. Kemble arrived tardily ; they began to fear he would not come, and they were a little alarmed ; at last, however, he was seen deliberately approaching the door, and good-humour revived. Soon after the cloth was removed, the bride and Bannister went off to the theatre together, and the bridegroom remained amusing himself with the children, and conversing in his usual way, in a manner more after the fashion of the philosophers, than might have been expected from a player on such a joyous occasion. When it grew late he ordered a coach to take him to the theatre, from which he brought home his bride to the house in Caroline-Street, Bedford Square, that had been prepared for her reception.

In the season of 1788-9, Kemble was appointed manager of Drury Lane. King had been his predecessor, but there was something behind the curtain which the public did not very well know, as to the cause of his retiring, and Kemble was, seemingly, so forced into the situation of manager, that he deemed it advisable to address the public on the subject in consequence of what had been alleged.

“ I find myself,” said he, “ arraigned by an anonymous writer, as having undertaken the management of Drury Lane theatre under humiliating restrictions. I do assure that writer and the public, that no humiliation degrades my services to those who do me the honour to employ me ; and that the power intrusted to me is perfectly satisfactory to my own feelings, and entirely adequate to the liberal encouragement of poets, of performers, and to the conduct of the whole business of the theatre.

“ The public approbation of my humble endeavours in

the discharge of my duty will be the constant object of my ambition ; and as far as diligence and assiduity are claims to merit, I trust I shall not be found deficient.

“ I am happy to add, that I find myself most fairly and ably supported by the general zeal and exertions of a company of performers, so capable of making the stage a source of pleasure and amusement.”

That during the time of Mr. Kemble's administration of the theatre a new era commenced is unquestionable. The scenery was rendered far more appropriate, and all the properties of the stage more splendid and suitable, to augment the illusions of the scene. While this taste was regulated by his excellent judgment of effect, it cannot be doubted that he was the parent of the modern improvements of the stage. At the same time it must be admitted that the tendency of these improvements has been to make the adjuncts of greater importance than the drama itself, and that often the audience is assembled more to witness the gorgeousness of the puppet-show, than to hear the poet's sentiment, or to enjoy the player's art.

Soon after Kemble had been promoted to the management of Drury Lane, he took, in conjunction with Mr. Aickin, the Liverpool theatre, and he was in the very depth of dramatic business, for about the same time he began the composition of a tragedy.

In 1789-90 Kemble took considerable interest in an event of that period, by which the public were greatly excited—the exhumation of Milton. A monument was intended to be raised to his memory in Cripplegate church, where he was interred, and it became in consequence, as it was supposed, necessary to ascertain exactly where the body lay ; a search was accordingly in-

stituted, and it was at last determined that the poet's relics were found. Two of the gentlemen engaged in the business repaired to the spot, and in vain endeavoured to discover an inscription on the leaden coffin, which was old and much corroded. They were, however, satisfied of the material fact, and retired, leaving the remains undisturbed, and directing the grave to be again closed. It was then the profanation commenced—a pawnbroker and a publican, belonging to the parish, resolved to see what could be seen, and brought out the coffin to the light, which they rudely opened, and found the body enveloped in a shroud of many folds, which they disturbed, and broke the ribs that were still standing up within it. These miscreants then attempted to extract the teeth, and the pawnbroker attempted to purloin the whole lower jaw.

From their ravages the coffin passed into the custody of the sexton's female servant, who with the watchman, lighted candles and made a show of it, and absolutely sold the teeth and smaller bones, with the hair. A player of the name of Ellis was among the curious, and he bought some of the hair and one of the ribs, which he showed to Kemble. This hideous transaction had its natural effect on his sensibility; he went to examine the remains himself, and was inclined to believe that the body which had suffered this blasphemous exhumation was indeed that of the poet; but Steevens, the commentator of Shakspeare, examined the matter carefully, and there is still reason to hope that the body was not that of the sacred bard. But the incident is awful; the mere possibility of such a desecration taking place in one of the most civilized and Christian capitals of Europe is appalling, when we reflect that it was on the remains too

of a poet only in estimation lower than the prophets of God.

On the 23rd of October 1790, Kemble retired from the management of Drury Lane theatre, and on the 10th of November he acted, for the first time in London, the part of Charles Surface in *The School for Scandal*. I consider this an important biographical fact, tending to show more of his natural character than transactions of far greater consequence; for in the whole range of the drama there is but one other, Sir Harry Wildair, that he was less fitted to sustain. Whatever Kemble attempted would be impressed with good sense, mingled with a flavouring of pedantry; but nevertheless there was always about him a stronger desire to excel than he had the power to execute — and the assumption of Charles Surface must be ascribed to this ambition. I remember hearing a story reported of his being lectured in the street by some of the play-going critics for venturing the experiment.

An incident deserves to be mentioned at this time, though belonging more to the history of the stage than the biography of Kemble. On the 4th of June 1791, Drury Lane theatre was condemned, and the fact was announced in a playful paragraph, which for its own spirit deserves preservation.

“ THE DEATH OF OLD DRURY.

“ On Saturday night, of a gradual decay, and in the 117th year of her age, died Old Madame Drury, who existed through six reigns, and saw many generations pass in review before her. She remembered Betterton in his declining age; lived in intimacy with Wilkes, Booth, and Cibber, and knew old Macklin when he was a stripling.

“ Her hospitality exceeded that of the English character, even in its early days of festivity, having almost the whole of her life entertained from one to two thousand persons, of both sexes, six nights out of seven in the week. She was an excellent poetess, could be grave and gay by turns, and yet sometimes catching the disorder from intrusive guests, could be dull enough in all conscience.

“ Her memory was most excellent, and her singing kept on in such a gradual state of improvement, that it was allowed her voice was better the three or four last years of her life, than when she was in her prime and at the latter end of the last century.

“ She had a rout of nearly two thousand persons at her house the very night of her death, and the old lady found herself in such high spirits, that she said she would give them “ no supper ” without a “ song,” which being complied with, she fell gently back in her chair, and expired without a groan.

“ Dr. Palmer, (one of her family physicians), attended her in her last moments, and announced her dissolution to the company.”

In the course of the summer, Kemble made an excursion to France, in consequence of a severe illness of his brother Charles, then at the College of Douay, but they met on the road; and the manner in which they met is represented as having been characteristic of John's peculiar humour. Without question, though his attainments were respectable, his character was in minor points strongly marked with singularities. In his younger years these may have originated in the desire of attracting public notice, but in after-life they certainly

gave him a slight cast of eccentricity. I have already shown his temper on the stage, and his philosophical composure at his marriage—his visit to his brother was performed in the same spirit.

Being alone and reading in his carriage when that in which his brother was advancing, he was startled by the sound of the other, and, raising his eyes from the book, exclaimed "Charles." A mutual recognition and a fraternal embrace was the consequence, and Kemble, who is said to have never been an inquisitive traveller, then coolly re-embarked in the same carriage with his brother, and returned with him to England.

Such quiet self-possession was, no doubt, in some degree natural to Kemble, and must have been highly useful to him in his profession; but, like many others, aware of their peculiarities, he probably sometimes indulged himself in it for momentary amusement, and to give matter for conversation, even while he felt more than he affected to feel.

But injustice would be done to Kemble in the subsequent transactions connected with the management of the theatre, were it not recollected that with whatever coolness he went through his duties, he had, in the peculiarities of Richard Brinsley Sheridan, to encounter no inconsiderable obstacles.

Kemble did not find his situation a happy one as manager of Drury Lane theatre. His aim was to exalt the renown of the stage. Sheridan cared less for its reputation, and became a leading politician, and weakly made the drama subservient to political patronage. Kemble saw this, and was with difficulty persuaded to remain as manager; for the affairs of the house were conducted without reference to his judgment, which he felt was

undervalued. In the management of the course he adopted to obtain release from this thralldom, much of his peculiar character was displayed.

When he had resolved to retire from the management of Drury Lane, there was a supper of some of the principal performers; Sheridan was expected after the rising of the House of Commons, and Kemble, with an inarticulate murmur, as it has been happily called, alarmed the company with the prospect of a scene. At length Sheridan arrived, looked kindly at Kemble, but the mimic monarch retained his state, and churmed his cherished wrath loud enough to be heard, then, rising, he astonished the senator and all present with a speech "in Ercoles' vein:"—

"I am," said he, "an eagle whose wings have been bound down by frosts and snows, but now I shake my pinions and cleave into the general air unto which I am born."

He then deliberately resumed his seat, and was again magnificently sullen. Sheridan, with his usual perspicacity, looked into the eagle's heart, and shifting his seat to the eagle's side, soon whispered him into good-humour and their differences were adjusted. The mock heroics of the theatre, however amusing to the general reader, are to the beings of that element stupendously solemn; the bombast of Kemble's speech has been deemed Shakspearian!

It would be to omit an incident at once characteristic of the taste and feeling of Kemble, not to notice that on the 24th of January 1793, when the tidings of the execution of Louis XVI. reached London, he closed the theatre.

Boaden speaks of Kemble as being averse to those

melodramatic exhibitions which were imported from the Germans, and that "he did his utmost to keep down this rage after novelty, but he found it beyond his power." In this a compliment is paid to his taste at the expense of his judgment, for he ought to have discerned in what way the current ran, and directed its tendency into a proper channel, especially when it was confessedly too strong to be resisted. The interest which the dramas of Germany excited in the British public might have been better gratified by procuring good translations of the plays of her great authors, than by ministering, with her "two-penny trash," to the flagrant feelings and audacious passions of the galleries. Kemble was sensible a change had come over the popular taste, and that the hideous events of the French revolution had whetted a morbid craving and appetite for suppers of horror. Had he really possessed that philosophic judgment which has been ascribed to him, instead of allowing the stage to be usurped by the base and coarse of German genius, he would himself have led the way by the exhibition of her noblest productions. But he really himself was very culpable in accelerating the progress of the melodramatic epidemic. Under a judicious adaptation, would not *The Robbers* have been a far richer entertainment than such Bedlamitic stuff as *The Mountaineers*? It is, indeed, in vain to say that Kemble understood the taste of the time, when he kept back works of genius and permitted from the same school rant and bombast disgusting to every judicious spectator. It is not too harsh to say that Kemble opposed the German theatre and countenanced the German booth, not intentionally, but by not availing himself of the sublime productions which

the former afforded, and allowing the offal from the bloody shambles of the latter to disgrace his stage.

Indeed, if Mr. Boaden reports his opinions aright, Kemble must have had both a narrow conception of the power of genius, and an erroneous idea of what the age required, for he makes him say, that "at Drury Lane theatre they did not want plays, the treasures of our ancient authors were inexhaustible; showy after-pieces and laughable farces might be necessary, but what could be expected now in the way of the regular drama that previously had not been better done?" It is to be feared that this is a stock opinion in the green-room, and will be ever productive to the marring of public pleasure, till some manager has the good sense not to allow the stage to be made an arena for actors to compete with each other in the same parts: the public are no longer invited to see new works of genius, but to determine whether Miss This is greater than Mrs. That in certain stock-characters in which Mrs. That was decidedly greater than Miss This. The dogma goes, in fact, to close the stage against the essays of modern genius, and to substitute a comparison between the merits of actors. There are, no doubt, vast treasures of ancient dramatic composition on the shelves of the libraries; but there they ever rest, because it does not suit the theatres to employ adequate talent to adapt them to the change that has taken place in the public taste since they were first written. The misfortune of the stage at present is, that the players, who are seldom eminently qualified by any particular advantages of education for the task, arrogate to themselves the characters of literary critics, and determine what the town shall receive

from them, as if the faculty of judiciously reciting the poet's composition qualified them in any superior degree to decide concerning its merits.

On the 21st of April 1794, the superb pile which had been erected on the site of old Drury Lane theatre, was opened for the regular drama by Kemble and Mrs. Siddons, as Macbeth and his tremendous lady. The edifice itself, though never completed, gratified the pride of the people both by its size and magnificence, and the performance of the tragedy surpassed both in the talent of the actors and the splendour of the scene all that had ever been exhibited on the English stage.

On the 2nd of April 1796, the famous forgery of *Vortigern*, by young Ireland, was acted and condemned. That it was so justly has never been disputed, but considered as the work of a boy, it is an extraordinary production.

The private manners of Kemble were essentially tragic. The Parisians wondered at his talent for silence. To them he appeared thoughtful and reserved, but they admired the statuary gracefulness of his manners.

During the season that Master Betty was the fashion, Kemble prudently made no attempt to resist the headlong rush of the town. It was frequently alleged at the time, that he considered the talents of that intelligent boy with jealousy! He had too much good sense; for he could not but see that Betty acted from being taught how, and had no conception in his own mind of the characters he undertook. He was but a clever automaton, a thing that worked well under the directions of others. As a child he was surprising, but as an actor, compared with those who did perform from their own conceptions, he was not even mediocre.

I first saw Kemble in the winter, in *Coriolanus* I believe, 1806-7. Had he only acted in that character he would have been deemed the very greatest male actor ever seen; it was in all points of conception, look, and utterance, equal to the *Lady Macbeth* of Mrs. Siddons. In no other part whatever, did he, or could he attain equal eminence. In every other, as compared with his masterful energy in this noble creation of the poet, he was only secondary.

I frequently saw him in *Coriolanus*, but I happened not to be present when the apple fell on the stage between him and *Volumnia*, a part which Mrs. Siddons sustained with all her wonted dignity. This incident of the apple gave rise to one of those occasional scenes, in which Kemble displayed his overcharged self-possession, and rendered the occurrence so important, to those who witnessed it, as to give it the impression of an event. At the moment when *Volumnia* is supplicating her son, the conqueror, to spare her country, the apple fell between them: taking up the missile with all the dignity of the character, he advanced, *Coriolanus*-like, to the front of the stage, and addressed the audience:

“Ladies and Gentlemen,

“I have been many years acquainted with the benevolence and liberality of a London audience; but we cannot proceed this evening with the performance, unless we are protected, especially when ladies are thus exposed to insult.”

A person in the gallery called out “We can’t hear.”

Kemble replied indignantly,

“I will raise my voice, and the galleries shall hear me.”

“This protection is what the audience owe it to themselves to grant; what the performers, for the credit of

their profession, have a right to demand, and what I will venture so far to assert, that, on the part of the proprietors, I here offer a hundred guineas to any man who will disclose the ruffian who has been guilty of this act.

“I throw myself, ladies and gentlemen, upon the high sense of breeding that distinguishes a London audience; and I hope I shall never be wanting in my duty to the public; but nothing shall induce me to suffer insult.”

In this little affair, the true spirit of Kemble was fully illustrated. There was that skinless sensibility which rendered him on all occasions so acute to the very shadow of affront. For the scene was always listened to with silence and awe, such as ever attended the united efforts of Kemble and Mrs. Siddons, and certainly it might have occurred to him, that the sudden appearance of the apple was not intended as a personal insult to either, and did not justify so much ado about nothing. It was indeed an accident; for the apple was not thrown at the performers, but at some disorderly females in the boxes, and only by chance fell upon the stage.

On the 20th September 1808, Covent-Garden was destroyed by fire, but Kemble sustained this vast misfortune, the loss of his whole property and the suspension of his profession, with great equanimity. Boaden has described with no inconsiderable force, the scene in his dressing-room when he visited him.

“In the morning after the fire, as soon as I had breakfasted, I hastened to Great Russell Street, to ascertain the state of the sufferers, and to give any little aid that I might be able to render. Honest John Rousham in silence let me in, and walked up-stairs before me into Mr. Kemble’s dressing-room. He was standing before

the glass, totally absorbed, and yet at intervals endeavouring to shave himself.

“Mrs. Kemble was sitting, in tears, on a sofa, and on seeing me exclaimed, ‘Oh Mr. Boaden, we are totally ruined, and have the world to begin again.’

“His brother Charles, wrapt up just as he had come from the fire, was sitting attentive upon the end of the sofa; and a gentleman much attached to Mr. Harris, who in and about the theatre was familiarly styled ‘old Dives,’ with his back to the wall and leaning upon his cane, sat frowning in a corner. It was not a situation that called for a speech; our salutations were like those at a funeral. I took a chair and sat observing the manner and the look of Kemble. Nothing could be more natural than for Mrs. Kemble to feel and think of their personal loss in this dreadful calamity. Her husband, I am convinced, while I saw him, never thought of himself at all. His mind was rather raised than dejected, and his imagination distended with the pictured detail of all the treasures that had perished in the conflagration. At length he broke out in exclamation which I have preserved as characteristic of his turn of mind.

“‘Yes, it has perished, that magnificent theatre, which for all the purposes of exhibition or comfort, was the first in Europe. It is gone, with all its treasures of every description, and some which can never be replaced. That library which contained all those immortal productions of our countrymen, prepared for the purposes of representation! The vast collection of music composed by the greatest geniuses in that science — by Handel, Arne, and others; most of it manuscript in the original score! That wardrobe, stored with the costumes of all

ages and nations, accumulated by unwearied research and at incredible expense ! Scenery, the triumph of the art, unrivalled for its accuracy, and so exquisitely finished, that it might have been the ornament of your drawing-rooms, were they only large enough to contain it ! Of all this vast treasure, nothing now remains, but the arms of England over the entrance of the theatre, and a Roman eagle standing solitary in the market-place.' "

On this disastrous occasion, several of the friends of Kemble came forward with their assistance in the most munificent manner. His late Majesty George IV. was among the earliest, and the late Duke of Northumberland in the handsomest manner offered a loan of 10,000*l*.

In the course of a few days, the Opera-house was prepared for the reception of the Covent Garden company, who commenced a series of performances there till the end of the season, while another theatre on the site of the old one was erecting on a more magnificent scale ; but the templar exterior of that edifice is a disgrace to the taste alike of the architect and the managers, and the less said about it as a building the better.

The day on which the foundation stone of the theatre was laid, was distinguished by an act of princely munificence towards Mr. Kemble by the Duke of Northumberland. The proprietors and their friends dined together, and Kemble rose with a letter in his hand which he had that moment received from the Duke. It noticed the business of the day, as rendering it one of the proudest in Mr. Kemble's life, and conveyed his Grace's determination to make it one of the happiest ; and, as no doubt the joy of all concerned would demand and justify a bonfire on the occasion, he begged that Mr. Kemble

would use the inclosed to light the pile. It was his bond for ten thousand pounds cancelled.

But, perhaps, the most remarkable circumstance connected with the re-building, after this magnificent incident, was the O. P. war, a series of tumults which lasted for sixty-eight consecutive nights, between the proprietors and the public, chiefly in its fury directed against Kemble, as if he, who was only one of the proprietors, had been himself the cause of the attempt to raise the prices, an attempt which the public resisted. The details of this systematic riot are not worthy of more circumstantial notice, but throughout them the pertinacity of Kemble's perseverance to enforce the will of the proprietors on the people, had more of obstinacy than of firmness, and evinced more of that self-will which was the characteristic of his temper, than the practical wisdom which it was frequently said he possessed in an eminent degree.

The treaty of peace and the whole ceremony of the negotiation between the belligerents are worthy of place in the history of England, so happily do they serve to illustrate the spirit and manners of the age. Mr. Clifford, a barrister, the most distinguished chieftain of the rioters, had been given into the custody of a constable by one of the servants of the theatre, and in consequence he brought an action for the injury, and obtained from a special jury a verdict of damages of five pounds; immediately after which, to celebrate their success in the war, the O.P.'s advertised a public dinner to take place, and all who disapproved of the conduct of the managers and proprietors of the theatre were invited; Mr. Clifford was to be in the chair. The company consisted of about three hundred persons, and after the King's health, Mr.

Clifford stated that he had that morning received a message from Mr. Kemble, expressing a great desire to attend the meeting could he be assured of civil treatment. Mr. Clifford, as their Chairman, then said, that he had ventured to assure him of such a reception as one gentleman ought to receive from others ; and if supported in this pledge, he would immediately invite Mr. Kemble, who was in the house, to meet them. The proposition was unanimously acceded to. Kemble then entered, was received with as much applause as ever attended his finest efforts on the stage, and was seated in a chair on the right hand of the Chairman, who again addressed the meeting, and stated that Mr. Kemble had expressed himself sincerely sorry for the interruption of that good understanding which had ever existed between the public and the stage. He had also, on the part of himself and the other proprietors, expressed a strong desire to do every thing in their power to conciliate the public, and restore that unison of feeling which had heretofore been so common between them.

In the mean time a Committee had retired from the hall to draw up the treaty, and soon after they returned with it in the shape of the following Resolutions, which were then read from the Chair.

“We presume that the public will be satisfied with these, if acceded to on the part of the proprietors this evening, viz.

“I. That the private boxes shall be reduced to the same state as they were in the year 1802.

“II. That the Pit shall be three shillings and sixpence, and the Boxes seven shillings.

“III. That an apology shall be made on the part of the

proprietors to the public, and Mr. Brandon shall be dismissed." [He was the person who gave Mr. Clifford into custody.]

"IV. That all prosecutions and actions on both sides shall be quashed."

The Resolutions were severally put, and adopted almost unanimously. The Chairman then proposed a toast:—

"May this day's meeting produce a reconciliation between the managers of Covent Garden theatre and the public, equally advantageous to both!" and it was drunk with three cheers.

Mr. Kemble then rose, and said,

"Gentlemen,

"Before I withdraw for the purpose of making the necessary preparations for stating the arrangement that has taken place in to-morrow's newspapers, I beg leave to express my hope, which I do from the bottom of my heart, that the propositions now agreed to will lay the foundation of a lasting good understanding between the public and the theatre; I have also to return you personally my best thanks for the kind and polite treatment I have received since I came into this room."

Mr. Kemble then retired.

A transaction of this kind has no parallel in the annals of any other kingdom, and although no possible excuse can be made for the proprietors resisting the public will so long, still the affair itself merits to be ever quoted as an instance of the good sense and resolution of the British public. Doubts have been thrown out of the prudence of the Government in permitting the tumults to

rage in the theatre so long as sixty-eight nights, but on few occasions have popular feeling been so wisely considered, or the freedom of the people more judiciously indulged.

The tumult at the theatre was that night of a more mitigated description, in consequence of the dinner at the Crown and Anchor, and the interruptions during the play proceeded only from communications made almost every minute from the tavern to the pit; at length the cry of "Mr. Kemble" was heard, and he made his appearance as he came from the camp of the enemy. Silence being procured, he addressed the audience.

"Ladies and Gentlemen,

"I ask a thousand pardons for presuming to appear before you in a dress so little suitable to the very high respect which I feel, and which it is my anxious wish ever to show in this place; it is entirely owing to the circumstance of my not being apprized that I should have the honour of appearing before you this night. Ladies and Gentlemen, I have been with the company of gentlemen who have dined together at the Crown and Anchor tavern, where a set of propositions were submitted to us for consideration, and to which the proprietors have agreed. The first proposition is, that the boxes should continue at seven shillings, that the pit should be lowered to the old price, and that the tier of private boxes should be restored to the public at the end of the present season. And, Ladies and Gentlemen, that no trace or recollection of the unfortunate differences which have unhappily prevailed so long should remain, I am further to say, that we most sincerely lament the course that has been pursued, and we engage

that all legal proceedings shall forthwith be put a stop to on the part of the proprietors; I pledge myself that instructions to that effect shall be given immediately. Now, Ladies and Gentlemen, before I retire give me leave to express my most lively sense—"Here a tumult arose, and he made his bow and retired.

But peace was not yet proclaimed; Kemble either forgot or intentionally omitted the condition with respect to Mr. Brandon, and the tempest again rose. At last Munden appeared with Brandon to read an apology, but he was assailed with all sorts of missiles from the pit, and compelled to withdraw; another attempt by the son of Mr. Harris was made in favour of Brandon, but the answer was "He must be dismissed."

On the following evening all things denoted the renewal of hostilities, and Kemble again came forward and said,

"Ladies and Gentlemen,

"Having had the misfortune to incur your displeasure, Mr. Brandon has withdrawn himself from the office of the box-book and housekeeper to the theatre."

But this was not enough. The proprietors had attempted to equivocate with the public, and the O. P.'s in their indignation insisted that a specific apology should be made for the employment of the boxers to coerce them, for such had been the case. And Kemble immediately came forward and spoke to the following effect:

"I understand your displeasure now arises, gentlemen, that an apology has not been made for the introduction of improper persons to this theatre. I ask your pardon

for not having made it sooner; and I now in my own name, and on the part of the proprietors, most humbly apologise for the same; we are very sorry for what is passed, and beg leave to assure you that inclination and duty will alike render it our first pride, for the time to come, to prevent any thing of the kind from occurring again."

Kemble was here cheered by an universal huzza, and the O. P.'s, in anticipation of their victory, had come prepared with a large placard, which they hoisted in the pit, with the words inscribed

"We are satisfied."

Thus terminated that memorable war, in which John Bull was right from the beginning, and the proprietors in the end justly punished. They held a monopoly, and in consequence, the consent of the public to the increase of price and the change in the form of the theatre, was a fit and becoming subject to be submitted to their consideration. But the perseverance in an obstinate refusal for sixty-eight nights, deserves a harsh epithet, for be it remembered that the course adopted by the theatre, had no less a tendency than to deprive the public of their amusement; for, by the pretensions forced on their patients, it was supposed that the proprietors had a right to interdict the erection of new theatres; and, of course, that it was in their power to do what they attempted.

Peace had scarcely been established, when discord again threw her apple on the stage. In the performance of Prospero in *The Tempest*, Mr. Kemble amazed the critics by an attempt to introduce a new reading of the word aches—calling the plural *aitches* in the following passage,

“ If thou neglect’st or dost unwillingly
 What I command, I’ll rack thee with old cramps ;
 Fill all thy bones with *aches* ; make thee roar,
 That beasts shall tremble at thy din.”

It is inconceivable what a stir this innovation made at the time. Kemble defended himself in the following letter.

“ My dear Sir,

“ I never do pronounce the word *aches* in two syllables, (like the word *itches*,) but when the metre of a verse (that is, but when the measure of the poetry or verse) requires it.

“ The old pronunciation of the word *aches* in two syllables is so entirely laid aside in common conversation, and in all modern use, that it would be ridiculous indeed, to use it familiarly, and idle to attempt its revival in poetical composition : yet when the word occurs as a dissyllable in our elder poets it must be so pronounced ; because in a metrical work the metre must be observed.

“ These lines are in Pope’s Essay on Man,

‘ Ask of thy mother-earth why oaks are made,
 Taller or stronger than the weeds they shade !
 Or ask of yonder argent fields above,
 Why Jove’s satellites are less than Jove.’

“ The word *satellites* is now-a-days pronounced in three syllables, and a man must be a coxcomb to affect to pronounce it otherwise ; but it was pronounced as four in Mr. Pope’s time, and he employs it as four, and a man would be thought very ignorant, who, in reciting Pope’s lines, would destroy their metre by giving this word its

modern pronunciation. If the old use and pronunciation of the word *aches* can be decided by authority, I should think Baret, in his "*Alvearic*," fol. 1580, conclusive on this question.

" ' The *ache* or payne of body or mind, &c.

" ' To have *ache*, payne, or griefe, &c. vide *ake*. And under *ake*, to which the reader is referred, *ake* is the verbe of this substantive *aches*, ch being turned into k, &c.'

" So that it appears that anciently the monosyllabic pronunciation distinguished the verb and substantive.

" I beg pardon for taking up your time with so much of this uninteresting matter.

" I am, my dear Sir,

" Yours, truly,

" J. P. KEMBLE."

This appears a very unsatisfactory defence, a lame and impotent conclusion. What is the authority for the pronunciation of satellites, as given in four syllables in Pope's time? He might as well have stated that Charles was always pronounced as two syllables, merely because in Charles's time it was customary to use it so when in the genitive. From that example it may as fairly be inferred that in the passage quoted, Jove's was pronounced as two syllables, as that satellites was in four. It is not so long ago since it was the custom to say of an individual's property, *his* property; as William Shakspeare *his* plays.

The friends of Kemble took a part in this important controversy, and Hudibras was quoted as a proof of the accuracy of his taste.

" Can by their pains and *aches* find
All turns and changes of the wind."

But these erudite personages forgot that *Hudibras* was composed two ages after *The Tempest*, and at most it could only be allowed that Butler used the word as it was found to be used there. Nothing, therefore, can be deduced as to the pronunciation of aches in Shakspeare's time by the fashion of a subsequent pronunciation. To prove that Kemble was correct, examples should be found of the manner in which it was used before *The Tempest* was written.

It has now long been an ascertained fact, that many of the corruptions of Shakspeare *his* text are printers' errors; for example: Macbeth's ravelled sleeve of care should be ravelled skein; the former being nonsense, and the latter a "household word." In this case of the aches, the monosyllable *and* has probably been omitted, and instead of reading aitches to fill up the measure of the verse, it should be read thus: .

"If thou neglect'st, or dost unwillingly
What I command, I'll rack thee with old cramps;
Fill all thy bones with aches, AND make thee roar,
That beasts shall tremble at thy din."

A change which not only gets rid of the dispute, but makes better sense and smoother verse.

From this time Kemble's professional career was not distinguished by any remarkable event. He continued to enjoy the esteem of the public, both on account of his merits as an actor and a man, but he suffered severely from the gout, and withdrew partly in consequence for about two years from the stage. On the 15th of January 1814, he returned, no longer, however, as one of the company, but as a star, to shine a limited number of nights, and all his subsequent engagements were of the same character.

In 1817 he visited Edinburgh, and took leave of the Scottish public in an address written by Sir Walter Scott; and on the 23rd of June, in the same year, he acted for the last time in London, and took leave of the public in his greatest part, Coriolanus. On this occasion he received a compliment to the undecayed energy of his powers in a cry from the pit of no farewell; but he, nevertheless, came forward and said,

“ Ladies and Gentlemen,

“ I have now appeared before you for the last time. This night closes my professional life.

“ I am so much agitated that I cannot express with any tolerable propriety what I wish to say. I feared, indeed, that I should not be able to take my leave of you with sufficient fortitude—composure I mean—and had intended to withdraw myself before you in silence; but I suffered myself to be persuaded that, if it were only from old custom, some little parting word would be expected from me on this occasion. Ladies and Gentlemen, I entreat you to believe, that whatever abilities I have possessed, either as an actor in the performance of the characters allotted to me, or as a manager, in endeavouring at a union of propriety and splendour in the representation of our best plays, and particularly of those of the divine Shakspeare,—I entreat you to believe, that all my labours, all my studies, whatever they have been, have been made delightful to me by the approbation with which you have been pleased constantly to reward them.

“ I beg you, Ladies and Gentleman, to accept my thanks for the great kindness you have invariably shown me, from the first night I became a candidate for public

favour, down to this painful moment of my parting with you ! I must take my leave at once. Ladies and Gentlemen, I most respectfully bid you a long and an unwilling farewell."

A few days after, a public dinner was given to him by a numerous body of his friends and admirers. The chair was filled by Lord Holland, with Mr. Kemble on his right, and the Duke of Bedford on his left. After dinner it was announced that the players intended to present him with an elegant vase ; and an ode written for the occasion by the author of " The Pleasures of Hope," was recited which, however, was not in the happiest vein of that poet's elegant genius.

There is but little to add to these few sketches. Mr. Kemble soon after retired, on account of the state of his health, to the South of France, and fixed his residence at Toulouse, from which, after several seasons, he was induced to move to Switzerland, whence he was suddenly summoned to London by the death of Mr. Thomas Harris, his co-proprietor in the theatre. On this occasion he made over his share of the theatre to his brother Charles, and returned to Lausanne. From Lausanne he made an excursion into Italy ; at Rome, however, his health became so impaired that his physician ordered him back to Switzerland, but, though his symptoms for a time were flattering, he died on the 26th of February 1823, in the sixty-sixth year of his age.

That the professional talent of Mr. Kemble was of the most splendid kind, and that, by his gentlemanly conduct through life, he reflected honour on his profession, are two points that admit of no controversy. Objection may be taken, perhaps, to the first, arising from a

natural weakness in his voice, and something not regularly clear in the conception of particular passages in some of his great parts, but still all his contemporaries will agree that he left but little to be desired to complete his excellence. It may, in like manner, be objected to his private manners that they were tinged with affectation ; but it ought to be remembered that Kemble was one of those occasional men on whom Nature bestows singular endowments, and what, in ordinary men, would have been called affectation, in him probably proceeded from the peculiar feelings connected with his greater qualities. In literary reputation he is below Garrick, and his compositions for the theatre are not distinguished by any brilliancy. On the contrary, some of them may, hereafter, tend to dim the splendour of his professional fame. But, in one respect, he ought ever to be regarded as one to whom the British stage is under the greatest obligations. Before his time exactness, in all the circumstances of the scene, was not a primary object of solicitude with the manager ; but in many of his representations, we have seen this fulfilled, and learning guiding taste even to the minutest article of furniture and ornament. Had he possessed no other merit than what belongs to him from this source, he must still have been esteemed as one of the most eminent contributors to the innocent enjoyments of a polished people. Of his private worth it is unnecessary to speak ; the affection with which he was regarded by his friends is the best of all testimonies.

JOHN EMERY.

THE players most in estimation for the regularity of their private lives afford little matter for biography, and show, were proof wanting, that the profession is not in fault for those eccentricities of conduct, which, by the austere and illiberal, are considered necessarily inseparable from a player's life. In all his domestic relations, Mr. Emery has been uniformly spoken of with respect, and in the several duties which appertained to his sphere as a subject, he equalled not merely his friends, but was exemplary in his class, affording another instance, that however brilliant in adventure and character the actor may appear on the stage, owing to the variety of parts he performs, there is no obligation imposed on him to deviate from the proprieties which belong to his private station in society.

He was born at Sunderland, county of Durham, 1777, and received the rudiments of his education at Ecclesfield, where he acquired that use of the Yorkshire dialect which in his riper years was esteemed one of his greatest accomplishments, as the representative of clowns and grooms, and the various modifications of the rustic character. When he first imbibed a predilection for the stage is impossible to be determined, for it may be said of him that he was born behind the scenes, his father and mother being both actors of provincial celebrity.

He was originally designed for a musician, and, when only twelve years of age, was engaged at the Brighton theatre as performer in the orchestra. But, as his taste attached him more to the boards, he studied the part of Old Crazy, the bellman, in the farce of *Peeping Tom*, and made his debut in that character with great applause; his imitation of the imbecile gait and tremulous accent of age giving a high assurance of future eminence.

For two or three years subsequent, his apprenticeship to Thespis was served in the country theatres of Kent and Sussex, sharing the good and evil fortune of the ordinary stroller's life, from the vicissitudes of which, being "to the manner born," he suffered probably less in those acute inconveniences which so molest the other ill-starred heroes of the sock and buskin. At fifteen he obtained an engagement in the York company, under Tate Wilkinson, who has made himself more celebrated by his memoirs and as the wandering patentee, than when he was in the full possession of his fame as a mimic and an actor.

In the circuit which the York manager went with his company, Emery became popular, and it is no improbable conjecture to suppose that he observed the local manners narrowly, and with considerable discrimination. In the parts of old men he was always distinguished, and in that class of characters obtained the favour of the London managers; but even while there could be no doubt of his ability in them, perhaps the public judged as wisely of his talents, when it preferred him in exhibitions of honesty, simplicity, and rustic roguery.

At the age of twenty-one he came to London with a reputation which, even at that early period, was in a great measure fixed. His scope was very circumscribed,

and not susceptible of much enlargement, but it was of a rare kind, and deservedly welcomed.

He came out at Covent Garden theatre in the season of 1798, as Frank Oatlands in *A Cure for the Heart Ache*, and of Lovegold in *The Miser*, in both of which characters he established himself at once in the good opinion of the audience. But the applause he received during the performance ought, perhaps, to be ascribed more to the generosity of the public to encourage the talent which they saw he possessed, than to admiration at the excellence of his acting; at least, I think that in neither of these parts was he seen to so much advantage as in many others. That he looked and dressed Frank Oatlands with the correctest judgment cannot be disputed, but the dialogue of the part is in some places mawkish, and, in my humble opinion, he attempted to make too much of it. To those, however, who admired Morland the painter's fac-similes of hogs and boors, his personation must have been justly esteemed a chef-d'œuvre, but as I am not of the number, my criticism must be taken with due allowance; I say so frankly, for I wish to speak well of peculiar merits, although I never liked them. In Lovegold he affected a hoarseness that was to me positively painful to hear, and though it was impossible to withhold the tribute of approbation to the judgment with which he conceived the part, still it was a rigid and a rusty performance. He moved in it as if his joints had been as stiff as the hinges on the seldom-opened coffers of avarice, and his voice had a grudging croak that might, for aught I know, have been appropriate; but surliness is not a miser's vice; the actuating passion prompts to conciliation, for it is afraid of the world,

and is, in consequence, oftener met with clothed in gentleness craftily blended with simplicity.

His Caliban, in which his sore-throat rhetoric was still more apparent, was any thing but the poetical monster of Shakspeare. It is, however, a part that must with every actor be a failure, and the better it is done the more so. There are limits to the range of things which may be represented on the stage, and *The Tempest* and *The Midsummer's Night Dream* are both dramas of this kind.

Tyke, in *The School of Reform*, was, perhaps, Emery's ablest part; no character could be more energetically performed; it was, if excellence can be spoken of as a fault, too violent; for the dreadful feeling he infused into it could not be witnessed without pain, far beyond what the drama should ever attempt to inflict. It lacked of the temperance and smoothness of passion requisite to give pleasure; never was the frenzy of guilt and remorse so truly exhibited; it was a very whirlwind and hurricane of the soul; and few tragedies have ever drawn more tears. It is this single character that entitles Emery to the epithet of a great performer; nothing could be finer than his low cunning during the profligacy of Tyke, save only the pathos and storm of his grief and remorse. I saw it once, and I have read *The Robbers* of Schiller once, protect me from knowing them again; but I am safe, Emery is gone, and Morton's text affords no adequate idea of his vehemence.

It were useless to speculate on the excellence to which Emery, had he lived, might have attained in parts of that kind. The drama has few of them, but, undoubtedly, all his merits in simple and comic characters shrink into

insignificance compared with the tremendous energy of which he showed himself possessed, in those peals of terror more dreadful than thunder, which Tyke launches in his despair.

To the duties of his profession, Emery was an example to his brethren; he never, on any occasion but when suffering from severe indisposition, absented himself from the theatre, and was always master of his part. He had some talent in writing songs in the Yorkshire dialect, was a pleasant companion, and in drawing he was so accomplished, that had he not made the stage his profession, he was undoubtedly qualified to have risen to eminence as an artist with his pencil. But he fell prematurely, the victim of a gradual decay of Nature, I believe, in consequence of having ruptured a blood-vessel, on the 25th of July, in the forty-fifth year of his age, leaving a widow and seven children to deplore his early doom. To them the players, however, generously did all they could to mitigate so great a misfortune, and the contributions to raise a fund for their support did honour alike to the fraternal spirit of the profession and to humanity.

MRS. SIDDONS.

“PITY it is that the momentary beauties flowing from an harmonious elocution cannot, like those of poetry, be their own record ! that the animated graces of the player can live no longer than the instant breath and motion that presents them ; or at best can but imperfectly glimmer through the memory of a few surviving spectators ;” says Colley Cibber, and who, that remembers the triumphs of Mrs. Siddons, can withhold amen to these beautiful expressions of regret. Had I indulged my own feelings, I should not have attempted any portrait of her character here, for she still lives, and I have received such exquisite delight from her personations, that it would seem a sordid ingratitude to say aught of her susceptible of being construed to imply any sentiment but admiration. Could it, however, be imagined that a collection of the Lives of Players would be acceptable without some account of this sublime actress ? Or that any one who has enjoyed the Avatar of such perfection should not desire to tell posterity how much they have missed.

Mrs. Siddons, the daughter of Roger Kemble and Sarah Ward his wife, was born at Brecknock, in South Wales, in the year 1755. As they were players, and her father the manager of a company, she was introduced in childhood on the stage. An anecdote of her earliest performance, considered in connexion with her subsequent fame, possesses peculiar beauty. The family, at

the time, were in such pressing circumstances as rendered their benefit important, and the child, to stimulate curiosity, was brought forward in some juvenile part. The taste of the audience was, however, offended at her extreme youth, and the house was so shaken with uproar, that the young Melpomene, in alarm, was bashfully retiring, when her mother rushed forward, and, with that intellectual dexterity for which so many of her family have been distinguished, led her to the front of the stage, and made her repeat the fable of *THE BOYS AND FROGS*, so appropriate to the occasion, that the audience at once applauded, admiring alike the mother's address, and the elocution of the child.

In her thirteenth year, Mrs. Siddons was the heroine in some of the standard English operas, and sang the airs incidental to the parts with a degree of vocal elegance, seldom heard among the migratory nightingales of Thespis. In her fifteenth, a mutual passion arose between her and a young man, an actor of all work in her father's company, but, as it was deemed by her parents rash and premature, they removed her from the stage and placed her as lady's maid with a Mrs. Greathead, of Guy's Cliff, in Warwickshire. Her enthusiasm for her destined profession, however, suffered no diminution, and it is some encouragement to conscious talent to know that, at this period, she applied for an engagement to Garrick, and was rejected.

In her eighteenth year she was married to Siddons, her Romeo, with the consent of her parents, and soon after made her appearance on the stage at Cheltenham. In this situation she obtained the patronage of the first Earl of Aylesbury, who being not only a man of taste, but, what was of more importance, a nobleman, recommended her to Garrick, and induced him to request Sir

Henry Bate Dudley, then only the Rev. Mr. Bate, to attend her performances, and report upon her merits.

Bate executed his mission with discernment. He saw Mrs. Siddons in various characters, but was most struck with her in Rosalind, a part which, at her age, and in her then uncertain fortunes, she sustained with that mingled tenderness and spirit which makes it one of the finest and most difficult, though seemingly one of the easiest of all Shakspeare's characters. It so convinced him of her merits, that he persuaded her to proceed to London, and urged Garrick to grant her an opportunity of appearing before the public, confident that her talents would secure her an engagement. On Friday, the 29th of December 1775, she accordingly made her first appearance at Drury Lane, and, with that correctness of taste for which she was ever distinguished, she chose the temperate part of Portia in the *Merchant of Venice*.

It was not then the custom to bespeak the approbation of the public by any of those numerous artifices with which the world has since become familiar, but, nevertheless, Mrs. Siddons was received with so much distinction that, on the Tuesday following, she again repeated the part.

I am not one of those who believe that Garrick was actuated by jealousy in keeping back Mrs. Siddons; for whatever may have been his own merit as a performer, he certainly was not very perspicacious in discerning that of others; he had, moreover, too much regard for his pecuniary interest to have withheld Mrs. Siddons from the public, had he discovered the extent of her powers. The nature of the loose agreement with Mr. Bate, to afford her an opportunity of being seen by a London audience, may have also tended to prevent her from getting into any of those parts which best suited

her talents ; and certain it is, that with all genius there are cases in which it will scarcely rise to mediocrity, and yet possess at the time a latent energy capable of the most astonishing effects. Mrs. Siddons performed often, but she was only admired as a beautiful woman ; she appeared in no character which afforded her an opportunity of showing what she could do. Those who have accused Garrick of having repressed her powers, forget that the audience saw as imperfectly as he did the energy which she was capable of exerting. The fact seems to have been, that Garrick was disposed to consider comedy as the forte of the Tragic Muse, and it must therefore be regarded as an instance of favour that he revived *The Suspicious Husband* on purpose for her Mrs. Strickland, and played Ranger himself to her, old as he then was, and the part requiring youthful buoyancy and ease. It should also be recollected that the impression which Garrick had received of Mrs. Siddons' capacity was derived from the opinion of the Rev. Mr. Bate, and he had preferred her performance of Rosalind to all the other parts in which she had appeared before him.

I cannot, indeed, in any degree accede to the correctness of the theatrical tradition, that Garrick did not justice to the powers of Mrs. Siddons, for he revived, after several years' suspense, *Richard the Third*, and gave her the part of Lady Anne to his own character of the usurper. It may be true that Mrs. Siddons herself felt she had not been well used, but that feeling might proceed from a consciousness of possessing talent which had not been called forth. Ignorance, however, of what she was capable of achieving would more clearly explain the cause of her comparative failure than any invidious motive on the part of the manager, who had a clear interest

in her success. In two of Garrick's revived plays she was chosen to act the most distinguished parts with himself, and her name was printed in large type on the bills, an index of no small importance, at least, in green-room estimation.

When Mrs. Siddons left Drury Lane she accepted an engagement at Birmingham, and Henderson has the honour of first discovering there her great powers, in the summer of 1776, when he pronounced that she would never be surpassed; indeed, he wrote immediately to the manager of the Bath theatre, to engage her without delay.

The fame she acquired at Bath prepared the metropolitan playgoers for her second appearance; and accordingly on the 10th of October 1782, she returned to the stage of Drury Lane theatre, then under the management of King, and took the part of Isabella, in *The Fatal Marriage*. After having performed Isabella eight times before the 30th of October, she came out on that night as Euphrasia, in *The Grecian Daughter*, with scarcely less distinction; whatever, indeed, was less splendid in the part must be ascribed to the author. The text of Murphy could not delight like the simplicity of Southerne, but the performance had all the pathos and power in an equally transcendant degree with that of Isabella.

Her third appearance was in *Jane Shore*, a drama, which with scarcely more merit than its national and historical associations, has, from its first appearance, always maintained a respectable place on the stage. The effects of Mrs. Siddons' acting in the fifth act, are the only evidences that can be now referred to in proof of her greatness; sobs, and shrieks, and fainting fits, and universal tears drowned the applause.

Her next part, on the 29th November, was Calista in

The Fair Penitent. It must surprise the reader to find that Shakspeare was neglected; but it is a fact that speaks volumes of the taste which rules the stage. The text of Rowe certainly possesses many beautiful passages, and the general conception of the whole character, both in the silent action, and in the delivery of the dialogue being executed in the great style of Mrs. Siddons, made it decidedly the noblest part in which she had appeared in London. She chose the part of Belvidera for her first benefit, for her attractions had proved so great, that she was allowed two, and her weekly salary was increased. For her second benefit she chose Congreve's *Mourning Bride*, and was the Zara.

These six parts were all that Mrs. Siddons acted during the first winter. Isabella was considered the chief of them in effect, and that can easily be conceived, as it is more pregnant with simplicity, which was ever the grand feature of Mrs. Siddons' style—in addition to that visible intellectual conception, if the expression may be used, in the accuracy of which she could have no superior.

At the end of the season she went to Dublin, where her brother John was engaged for three years, and where, now ripening into fame, she grew as successful as in London.

On her return to the metropolis, she visited Dr. Johnson, who says in a letter to Mrs. Thrale, "Mrs. Siddons, in her visit to me, behaved with great modesty and propriety, and left nothing behind her to be censured or despised. Neither praise nor money, the two powerful corrupters of mankind, seem to have depraved her. I shall be glad to see her again. Mrs. Siddons and I talked of plays, and she told me her intention of exhibiting this winter the characters of Constance, Katherine, and Isabella, in Shakspeare."

On this occasion the Doctor was gallant. When she came into the room, there happened to be no chair ready, "Madam," said he, "you who so often occasion a want of seats to other people, will the more easily excuse the want of one yourself."

Among the compliments paid to Mrs. Siddons was the crowning one, as I doubt not the players deemed it—the presence of the court at each of her characters during the first season—and her being afterwards appointed reading preceptress to the Princesses. The greatest compliment, however, was paid in the justness of sentiment with which she was uniformly regarded—calm admiration, and anxiety, with the profoundest sympathy, were her constant attendants. Those paroxysms of rapture, with which the vulgar and fantastical idolize some kinds of theatric talent, are proofs rather of its mediocrity, than of excellence. Judicious admiration is a quiet feeling, and the correctness of taste with which this gifted lady was through life regarded, was something a-kin to the calm delight with which the works of Shakspeare and Milton are studied and enjoyed.

On the 3rd November she played Isabella in *Measure for Measure*, a part well calculated to bring out the same class of feelings in a higher degree, that made her formerly take Portia, earnestness and dignity, and enabled the soul "sitting in her eye," to speak far more than the poet has or could have expressed.

The first appearance of Mrs. Siddons and her brother John was in *The Gamester*, herself as Mrs. Beverley, and he as the infatuated husband.

But although Mrs. Siddons' walk was with the greatest parts on the stage, it must not be forgotten that there are characters besides them in other dramas of the golden age which require powers as great as she had yet dis-

played. It is, however, the system of the managers to attend only to what are called stock pieces, reducing the stage to a mere arena of competition for performers to try their comparative strength—a system injurious to the players, and niggardly to the public.

In 1784 the malicious demon, the shadow of Merit, was discovered following Mrs. Siddons, and with so much effect, that she found herself obliged to address the audience, even after those who were supposed to have cause of complaint, had acquitted her.

“ Ladies and Gentlemen,

“ The kind and flattering partiality which I have uniformly experienced in this place, would make the present interruption distressing to me indeed, were I in the slightest degree conscious of having deserved your censure. I feel no such consciousness. The stories which have been circulated against me are calumnies. When they shall be proved to be true, my aspersers will be justified: but till then, my respect for the public leads me to be confident that I shall be protected from unmerited insult.”

This address in her own case was delivered with all the dignity with which she sustained the part of Shakspeare's Isabella. But the firmness which sustained her before the audience, failed when she retired to her dressing-room, and the manager was obliged to solicit a short indulgence till she had recovered from her agitation.

In the course of the same year she visited Edinburgh, where she performed eleven nights, and since that period it has become a portion of the players' creed, that the Edinburgh audience is the most tasteful and judicious in the United Kingdom; an opinion which is probably not

altogether unfounded, for a larger portion of the inhabitants of that city have literary habits than perhaps those of any other, with the same degree of practical knowledge of the world and the various phases of man. It enables them to appreciate the beauties of the text with more acumen, while the advantages which they share in common with other places, give them the power of judging as to the fitness of the feelings with which the sentiments are expressed.

But although the triumph of Mrs. Siddons was complete during her first great season in London, it was not until she had appeared as Lady Macbeth that all the critics concurred in her indisputable supremacy.

When I first saw her in that character, it was at Durham, at a time of life when the youthful mind receives its most lasting impressions, and in the course of a journey, undertaken with two schoolfellows, for the express purpose of visiting those border antiquities which Sir Walter Scott has since elevated to an equal degree of interest with the storied scenes of Greece and Italy. But as I am at no time liable to be very deeply affected by the first sight of the most remarkable objects—the effect grows upon me, whether of distaste or admiration—I was not greatly struck with the first appearance of Mrs. Siddons in the scene. Her figure, sublime as it then was, only came up to my expectation: perhaps I felt she was too great for the place. This might be a physical effect, arising from the relative size of the stage compared with herself; but I might be justified in ascribing it to a romantic perception of the majesty of her own grandeur, as the Greeks thought the Minerva of Phidias filled the whole temple.

She entered, according to the tragedy, reading the

letter. It was evident by her manner that Lady Macbeth had previously seen something in the letter which had so affected her, that she had instinctively come forward two or three paces from the spot where she had first opened it. But when she came to "they made themselves air," she paused for an instant, as if doubtful of the term employed, and then uttered the word AIR in a tone of wonder. From that moment her voice assumed a more earnest accent, and I would say the demon of the character took possession of her.

I cannot, at this distance of time, and through the long vista of events on which memory looks back, describe any thing in her general performance which affected me so much as the low deep accent of apprehension, or of conscious conspiracy which she sustained throughout, especially as it influenced the utterance of her Medean invocation to the

"Spirits that tend on mortal thought,"

and still more in the subsequent scene, where she chastises, with her valour, the hesitation of Macbeth. The manner in which she delivered the speech—

"I have been a mother,"

has ever since pealed in the echoes of my remembrance as something indescribable; so far from impressing me with any thing of "a fiend-like woman," as I have heard her involuntarily called, it filled me with mysterious wonder that there should be a being of such incomprehensible strength of resolution. When Macbeth exclaims, in his admiration—

"Bring forth men children only,"

he seemed but to illustrate my own feeling.

The magnificence of her descent from the throne at

the banquet, was another example of the previously inconceivable sublimity of the genius that directed her conception of the part; and perhaps, as such, was not inferior to her somnambulism. Whether her action in the dream scene—that brightest spark of the poet's fire—was according to the phenomenon of the disease, I would not examine; for it was so tremendous, that, with such a character, gnawed with the Promethean agonies of crime, it ought to have been natural.

Through all the performance of the evening she spoke as it were in a suppressed voice, that seemed to lend additional poetry to the text, and which the author could not give in mere writing. I afterwards, however, suspected, that it was accidental. Henry Siddons, her son, who performed Macbeth, was not a judicious actor; his emphasis was too boisterous, and it might be that she assumed that under-tone, which seemed so poetical, from a desire to moderate his loud vehemence; at least, I never heard her speak in the same key again.

Of Mrs. Siddons' attainments in comedy I shall make no other remark than that surely it was a mystery to think it possible she could ever be endured in it. Nature was insulted when it was imagined that she could laugh otherwise than in scorn. Endured she no doubt was, and admired too, but it was profanation; she had no fit attributes but the dagger and the bowl.

I have had more than once occasion to observe that a player's life, when the goal of London approbation has been attained, becomes tame and stale, but, it sometimes happens, that circumstances arise which render it remarkable. In the history of Mrs. Siddons there is an incident of this kind, highly illustrative of her prudence and good sense.

During the illness of George III. in 1788, she was

among the earliest to discover his mental aberration, and the circumstance which first attracted her attention to it was an occurrence on the part of the King himself which, perhaps, had he been of a different character, would not have so particularly excited her surprise.

In her occasional attendance at the palaces, as preceptress in elocution to the princesses, His Majesty always treated her with uncommon attention. But, on the occasion alluded to, he put into her hands a sheet of paper merely subscribed with his name, — with what intent can only be conjectured, but with the discretion which characterised her general conduct, she delivered it to the Queen, who received it with dignity, and with the delicacy that Mrs. Siddons justly merited.

The incident, considering the King's strict character, was at the time regarded with apprehension, but it deserves attention in another point of view; for had there been the slightest hesitation on the part of Mrs. Siddons, had she not gone at once to her Majesty, from herself, and unadvised, the motives of her decision might have become questionable. It is, therefore, one of those facts which show how little the profession ought to be blamed for the errors of individuals. Indeed, why should it ever be so, for the very end and business of the players should make them familiar with highmindedness and virtuous demeanour? Mrs. Siddons, in this incident, only illustrated the dignity of her real character, by showing that the sentiments she often expressed, as an agent, were congenial to her own personal feelings.

It was not till the last time in which she performed Katharine in *Henry VIII.* that I had an opportunity of seeing her in that part,—one of simple dignity, and to which her majestic form would have given all the greatness that a perusal of the play would seem to re-

quire for an adequate representative. But with her intellectual expression of countenance, it became only inferior to the sublimity of Lady Macbeth, though of a very different kind indeed.

The manner in which she retired from the trial scene was equal to her grandeur at the banquet in *Macbeth*, and the sensibility with which she uttered,

“ God help me !”

as she quitted the room, was, perhaps, the most exquisitely just expression of grief and feeling ever uttered in representation. I should, however, only tire in prolonging the description of her dignity and sensibility. Her excellence in these two great and rare qualities constituted the main ingredient of her amazing sorcery.

But the intelligent sensibility which shone so beautifully on the stage, and so fascinated her auditors, was, in some respects, a baneful gift to herself, especially in the circumstances of that trial of the heart when she lost her two daughters. The early fate of these singularly beautiful young ladies, in itself deeply affecting, was enhanced to the sympathy of the world, by the romance in which it was involved. More, perhaps, it would be injudicious to say here, as the story of the late Sir Thomas Lawrence's attachment to them both has recently been told by his biographer with sufficient minuteness; a letter, however, of their mother, on the occasion, can from no sketch of her life be properly omitted, not only for the beauty of the spirit that breathes in it, but the almost Shakspearian dignity of the composition. It will suggest to posterity some idea of her poetical greatness of character, when those who still remember it can no longer bear witness to the justness of the admiration of their contemporaries.

“ The testimony of the wisdom of all ages,” says Mrs.

Siddons, "from the foundation of the world to this day, is childishness and folly, if happiness be any thing more than a name; and I am sure our own experience will not enable us to refute the opinion; no, no, it is the inhabitant of a better world. Content, the offspring of Moderation, is all we ought to aspire to here, and moderation will be our best and surest guide to that happiness to which she will most assuredly conduct us. If Mr. L—— think himself unfortunate, let him look on me and be silent. The inscrutable ways of Providence! Two lovely creatures gone, and another is just arrived from school, with all the dazzling frightful sort of beauty that irradiated the countenance of Maria, and makes me shudder when I look at her. I feel myself, like poor Niobe, grasping to her bosom the last and youngest of her children, and like her, look every moment for the vengeful arrow of destruction."

Independently of the severe calamity which befell Mrs. Siddons in the loss of her daughters, it has been said that she was latterly not happy in her domestic circumstances; but into topics of that private nature the public has no right to search. We have only to consider her as an actress, and in that capacity she was beyond all praise. In what other respects her intellectual accomplishments may have been eminent, I have no desire to ascertain—it is only as the representative of the conceptions of the great dramatic poets that I wish to consider her, and I regard all the other incidents of her life, but as those minor accidents of situation and fortune, which are commonly rejected in biographical memoirs.

On the 29th June 1812, she took leave of the public. The performance of the evening was *Macbeth*. I was present, and, in common with all my neighbours around, regretted that, yet in possession of such visible energy,

she should have felt herself so summoned by Nature, as to think of retiring. The occasion was distinguished by an instance of good taste on the part of the audience, which has no precedent in the annals of the stage. When she had retired from the sublime scene of the dream, a general movement was observed in the house, the remainder of the play was dismissed, and the spectators only lingered till she had repeated a short address.

She, however, came forward for the benefit of her brother, in the year following, also for the same purpose in 1816; and, at the request of the Princess Charlotte, she played again in the same year; but the Princess was unable to be present.

Of her life in retirement the public hear nothing. But her name is never mentioned without expressions of admiration, when the parts in which she excelled are spoken of; nor without a lamentation, that such excellence in art can be seen no more.

8th June 1831.

After the proof of this sheet had been corrected for the press, the newspapers of the evening have announced the death of Mrs. Siddons. The Courier says it took place at her house in Upper Baker Street, at half-past nine o'clock this morning, and was not unexpected. No remark can be made on the coincidence of the event, but it is striking that it should have happened just at this period.

THE END.

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